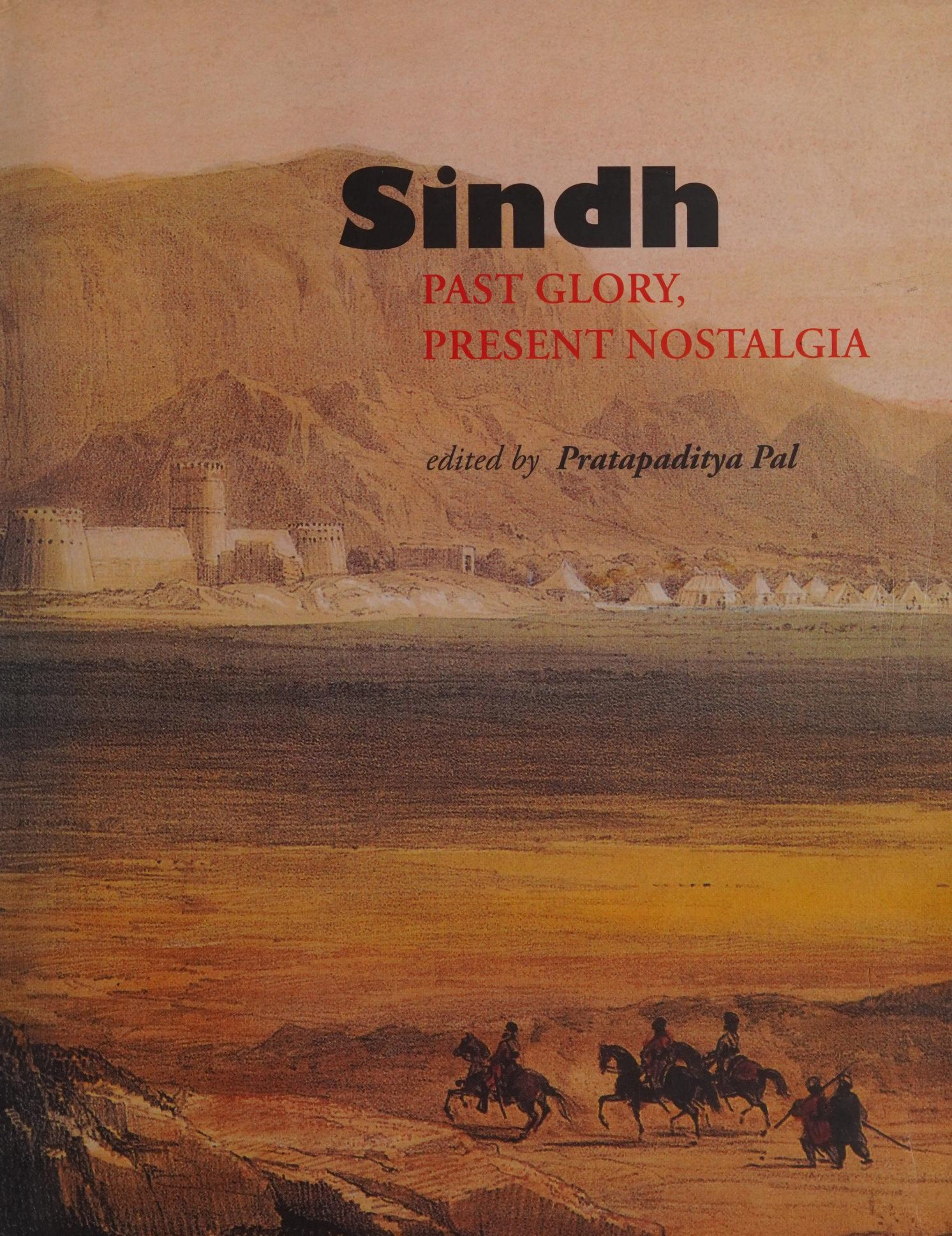
Sindh

PAST GLORY, PRESENT NOSTALGIA

edited by ***Pratapaditya Pal***



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Sindh

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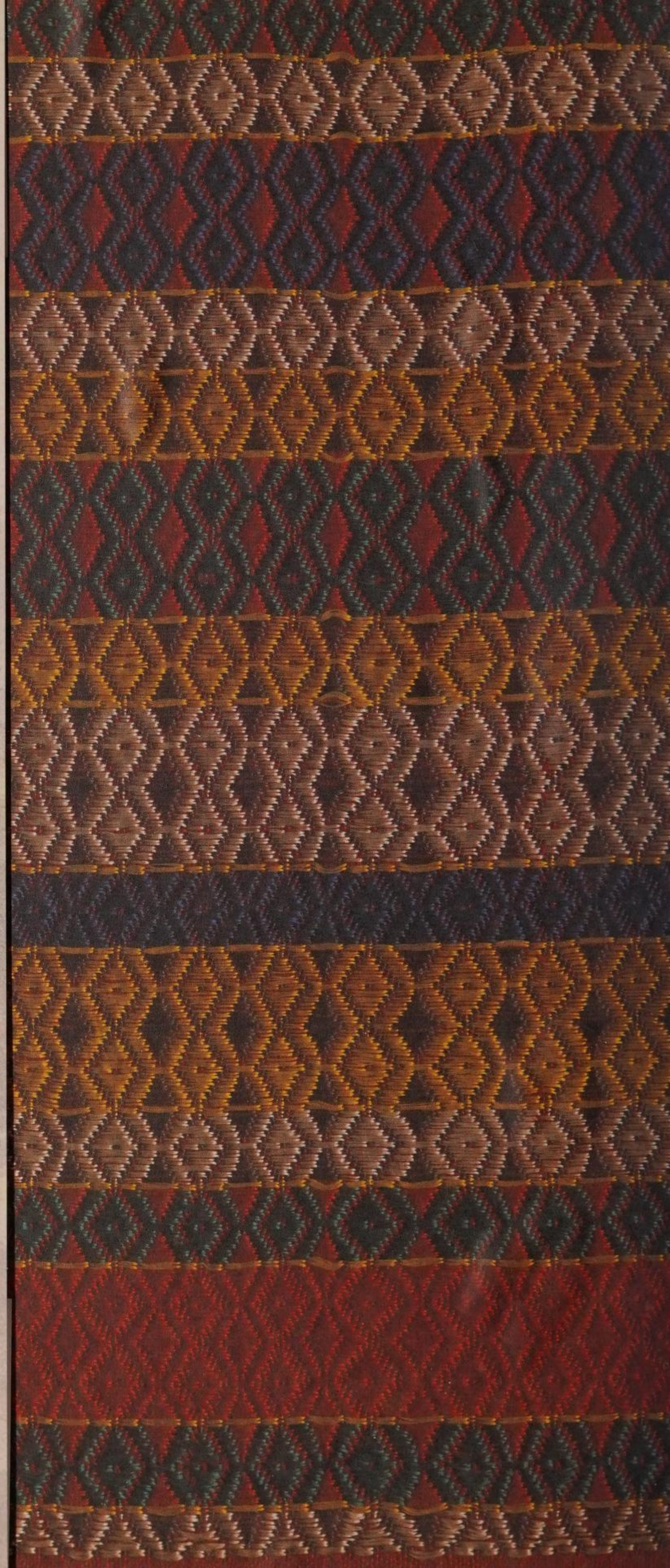
Sindh represents a unique geopolitical entity in the history of the Indian subcontinent. Drained by the Indus, its fertile plains stretch between the mountain ranges of Baluchistan to the west and the Thar desert in the east. Across the passes through Baluchistan, Sindh connects with Iran; on the eastern side the desert cuts it off from the mass of India barring a few caravan routes. The Indus delta makes up for this – acting as a trade artery along its length and giving Sindh strong maritime links with Kutch and Gujarat and across the Arabian Sea with the Persian Gulf. Situated at the crossroads of diverse cultural influences, its physical terrain has fostered a variety of crafts from the time of the Indus civilization to the present. Three major events have contributed to the shaping of Sindh's history, politics, and culture: the Muslim conquest in 711, the British conquest in 1843, and the Partition of India in 1947. The last has been the most dramatic and far-reaching, altering the demography of the region when the Hindus moved out and Muslim refugees from other parts of India moved to Pakistan.

This is the first lavishly illustrated book to look at the heritage of Sindh, with chapters by scholars from both India and Pakistan. The first half takes note of the famed Indus civilization; the Buddhist stupas and sculpture, Hindu temples, Islamic monuments and tombs; the port city of Banbhore; and the coinage and economy up to the time when the British annexed Sindh. Later chapters evoke a sense of cultural nostalgia on a range of subjects: the colourful woven and embroidered fabrics of Sindh; the visual records of the region by British artists and photographers; Karachi, cosmopolitan city of Sindh, modelled on Bombay, as remembered by those who once lived there; the sense of tumult and displacement which still resonates in works by artists on both sides of the border; and the distinctive cuisine of the province as remembered by diasporic Sindhis.



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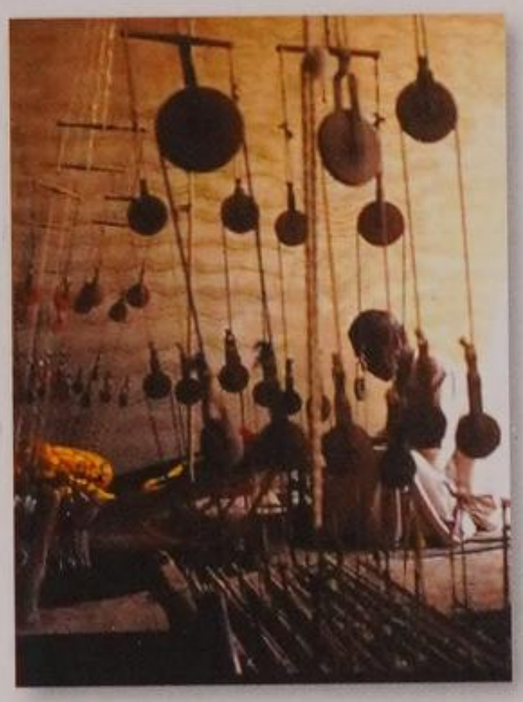

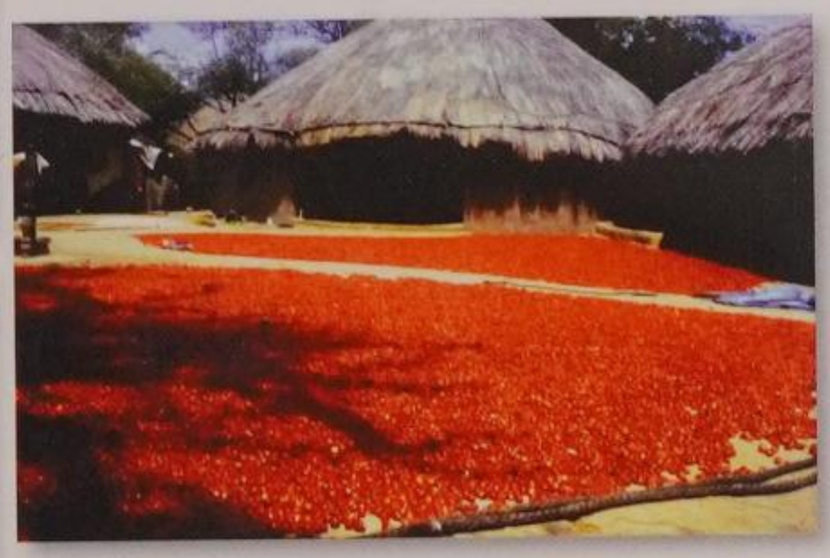

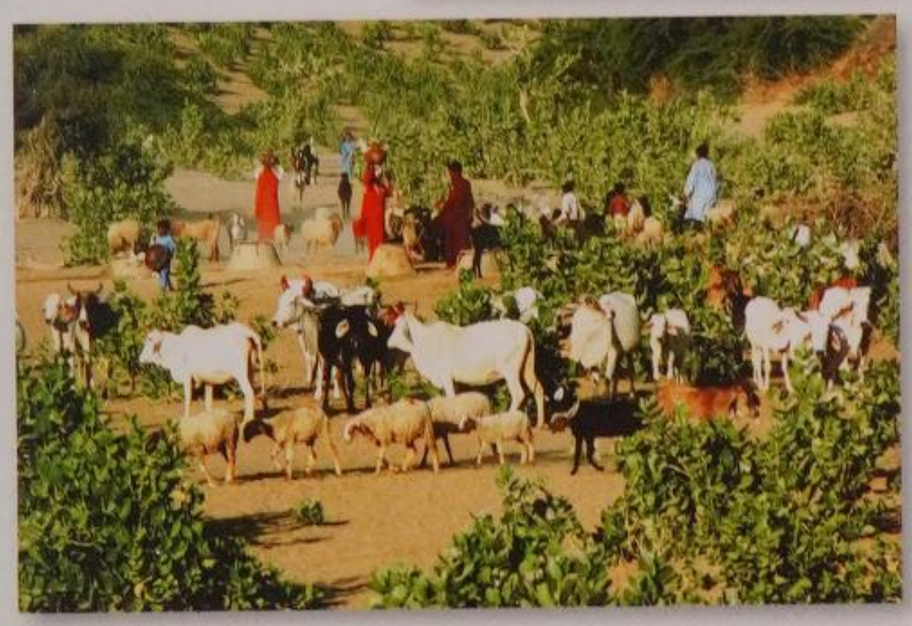

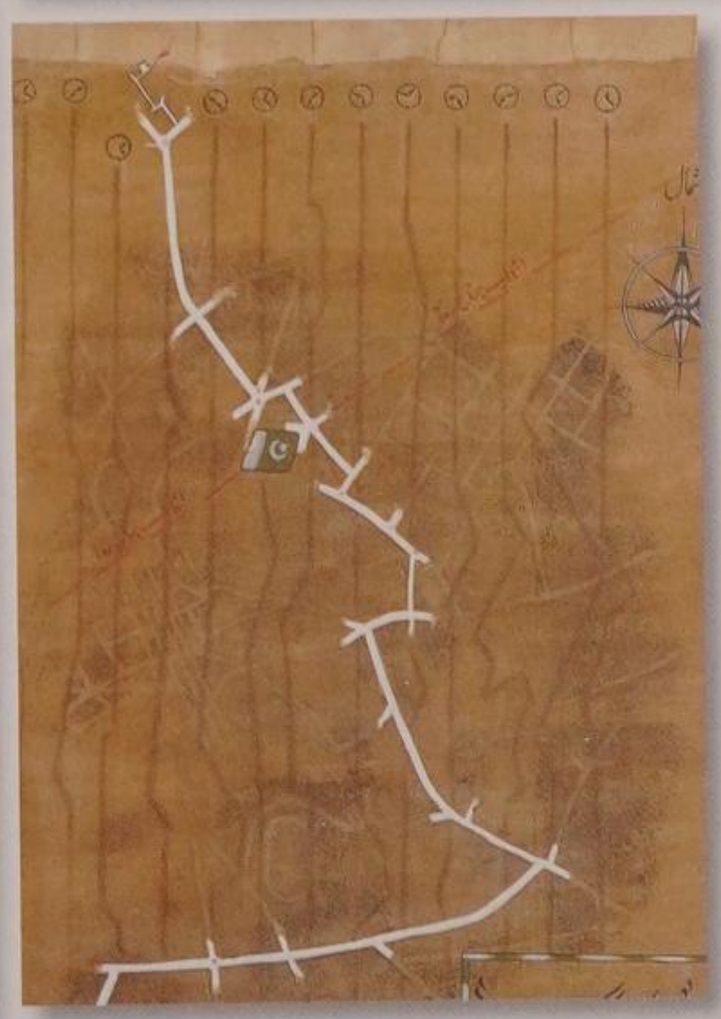

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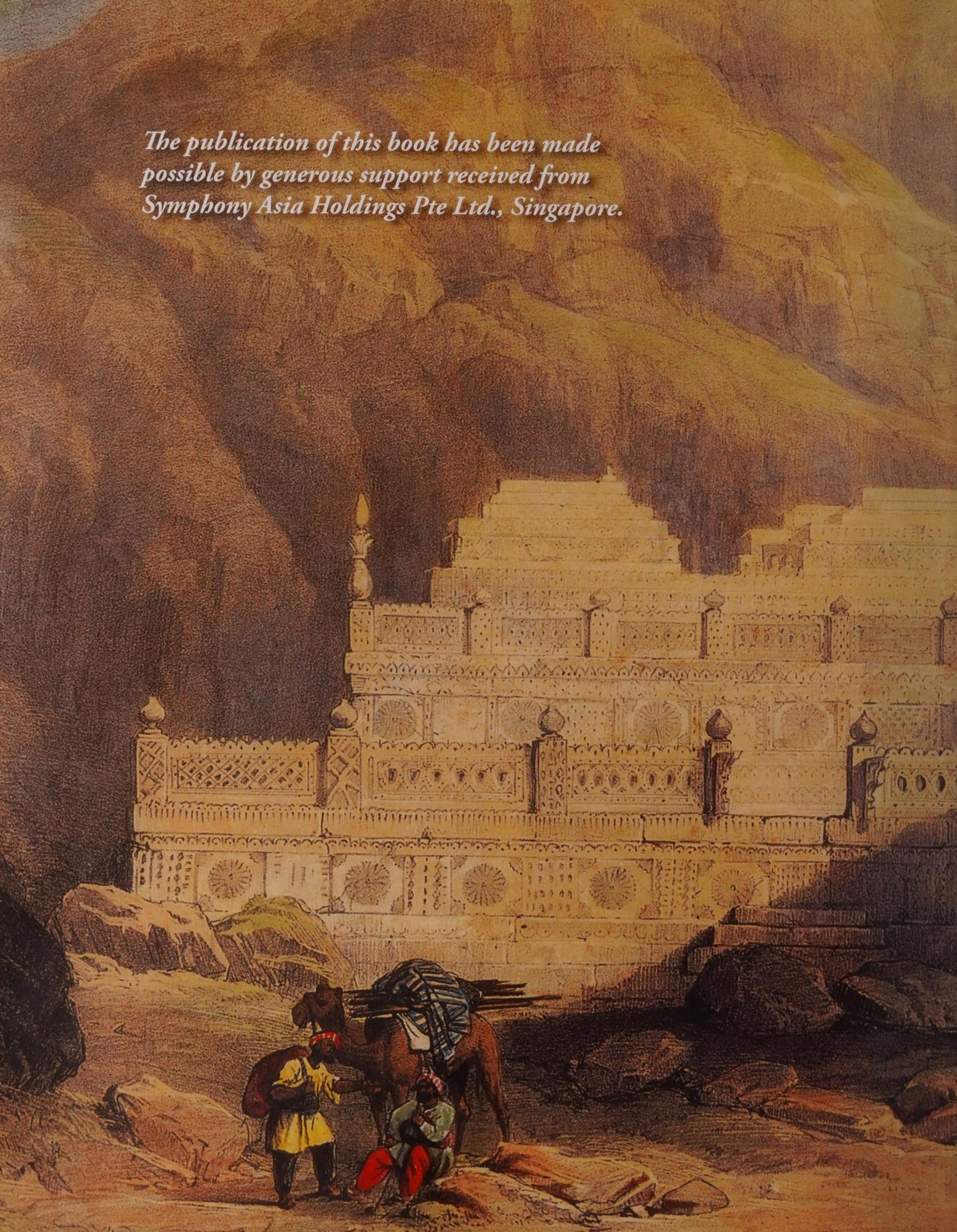

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edited by ***Pratapaditya Pal***

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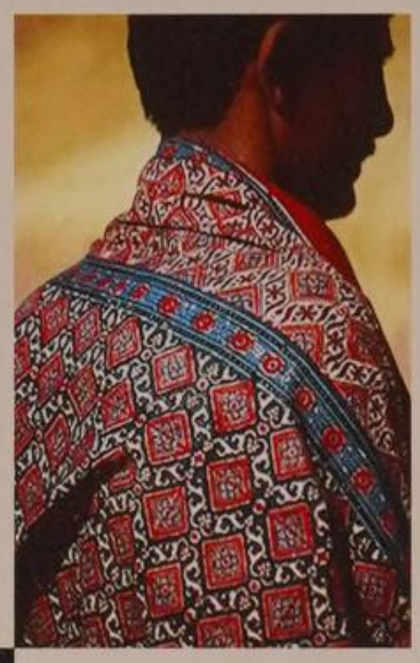

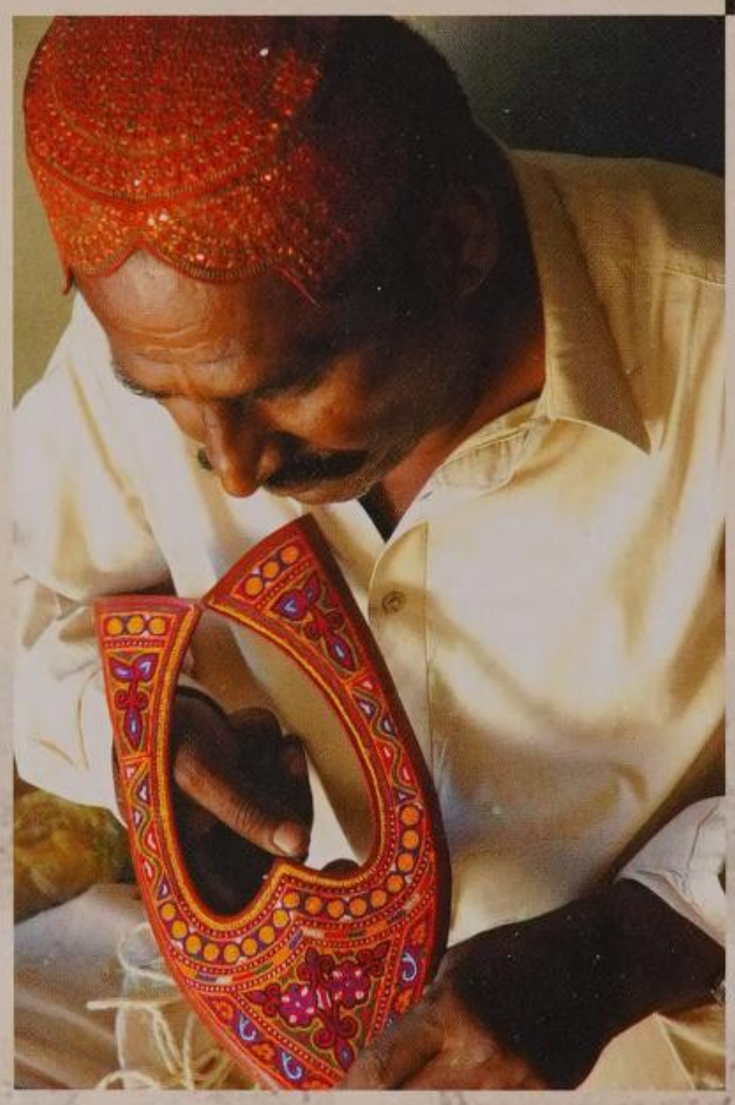

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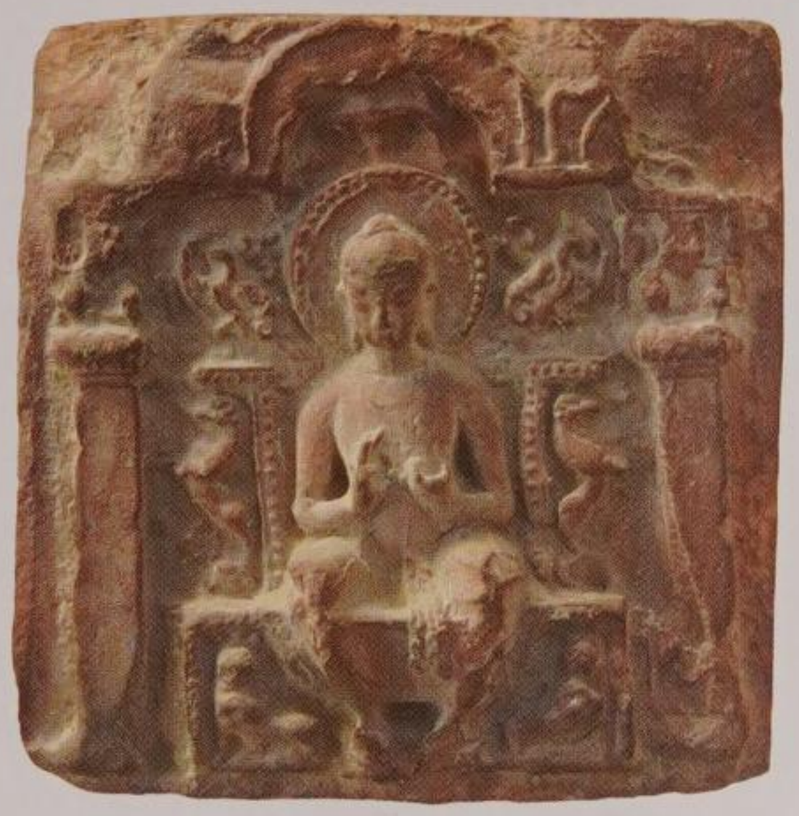
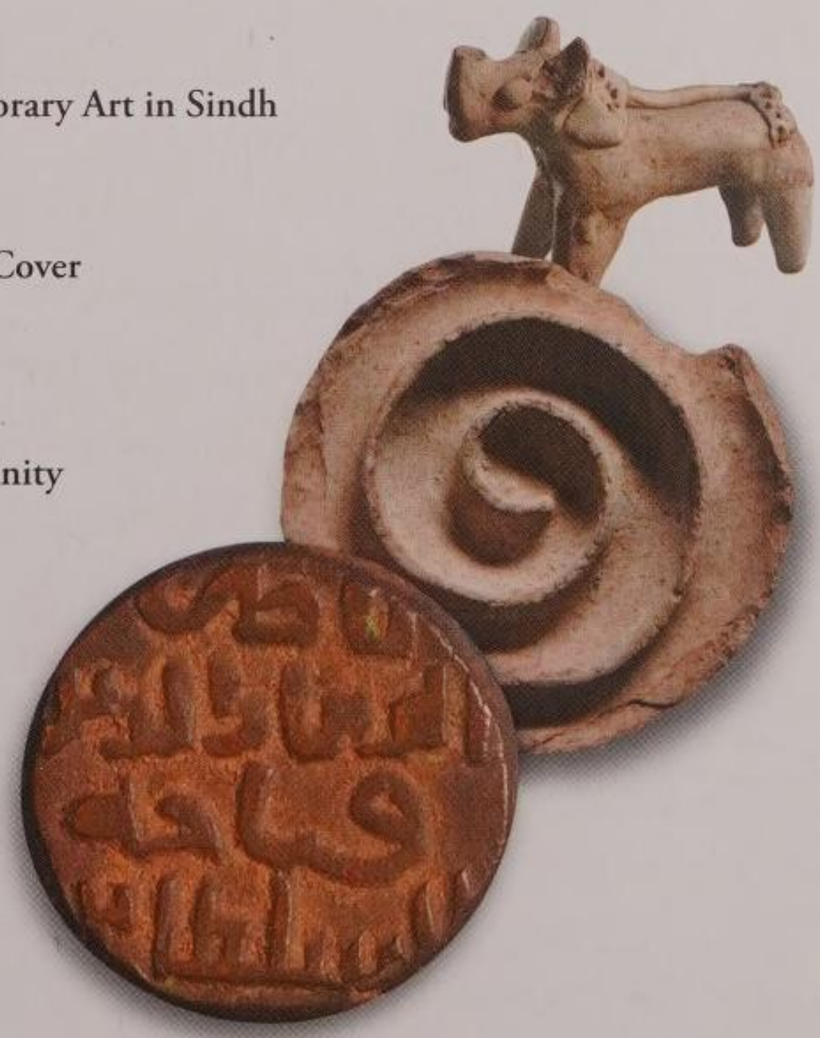


Note:

In this volume we have used the current official spelling "Sindh". The spelling "Sind" was in use till 1990.



Captions for preliminary pages:

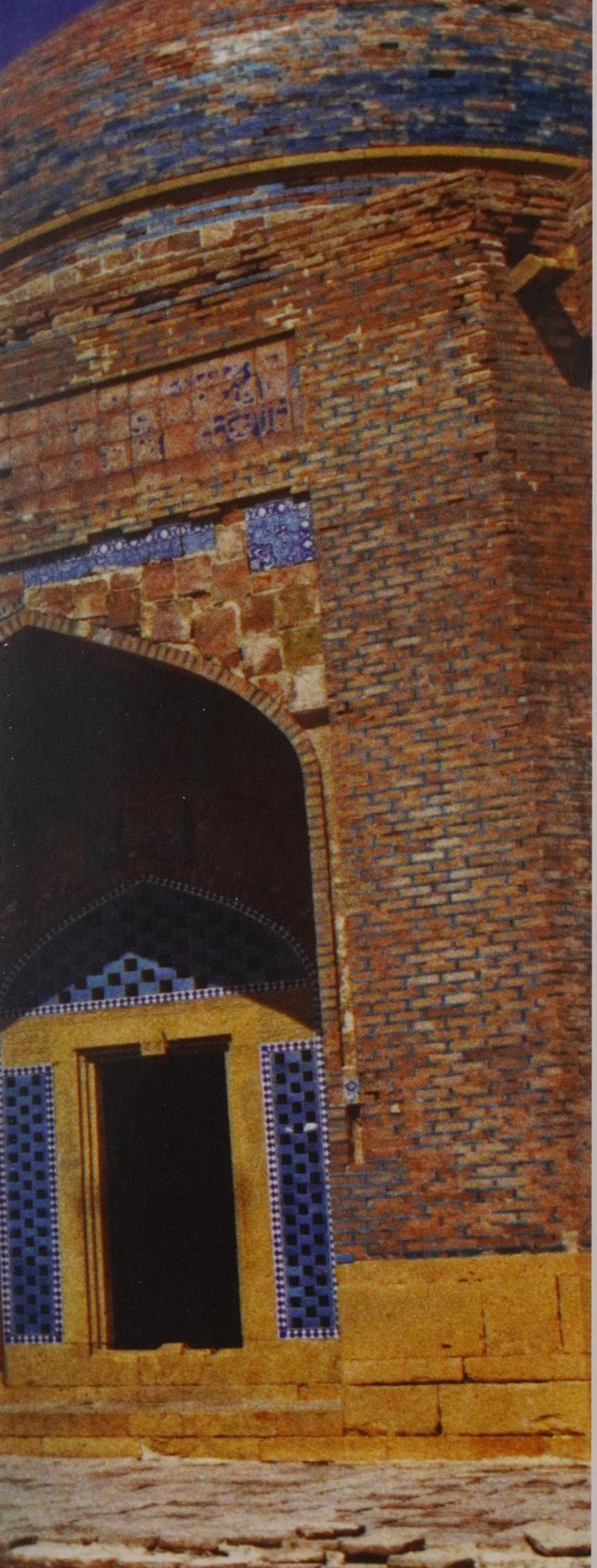
End-papers: *Susi*, legendary striped cotton and silk cloth of Sindh, presented on ceremonial occasions to be worn as a *patka*. Courtesy R. Malkani.

Page 1: Chillies drying in the sun, Tharparkar district, photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami; Gur Mandir, a Sindhi gurdwara in Karachi; see page 153; a shrine in Shikarpur, photograph: Sanjay Talreja; desert scene, Tharparkar district, photograph: Jamshyd Masood; see page 112.

Pages 2–3, 4: "Tombs at Truck", and "Hyderabad Fort" from Edwards' *Sketches in Scinde*, 1846. reissued by Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2004. Page 4 *insets: Ajrak* inspired by tile patterns, photograph: Irfan Naqi; see page 115.

Page 5: see pages 50, 57, 31, 35, and 43.

Pages 6–7: see page 90; a decorative brick from Jerruk, ASI archives.



Preface

Continuing our regional studies of the subcontinent, this volume presents a baker's dozen essays on the history and culture of Sindh, a province of Pakistan. The last book of essays providing an overview of Sindh was *Sind Through the Centuries* published in 1981 by Oxford University Press. It is an invaluable resource for our understanding and knowledge of the region's history and culture but unfortunately it has been out of print for some time. So this book, though less ambitious in the sweeping breadth of its survey, especially in verbiage, does explore several new themes, particularly in the modern period, and is a great deal richer in visual appeal.

Sind Through the Centuries was written by a galaxy of scholars, most of whom, alas, cannot be replaced today. Not only is there a steady devaluation in erudition these days but finding enough contributors who are both erudite scholars and facile writers is a difficult task. Nevertheless, we are grateful that so many of our colleagues in both India and Pakistan responded with enthusiasm to our invitation. It should also be noted that for the first time in many decades almost all the contributors in this volume are of subcontinental origins, which is particularly gratifying to this editor.

Although Sindh today has remained stable geographically, culturally it has been much diminished by the flight of its Hindu population due to Partition in 1947. And those who remained behind have been overwhelmed by mass migration of strangers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Thus, whether at home or abroad, the Sindhi clearly has an identity crisis. If, as J. Nicholas Entinkin has asserted, "place is a condition of human experience" because "as actors we are always situated in place and period and…the contexts of our actions contribute to our sense of identity and thus to our sense of centeredness,"[1] then the Sindhi has little reason to be optimistic.

It remains my pleasant task to thank the contributors, the several individuals who have helped in many ways in the book's production especially Savita Chandiramani, Marg's resident Sindhi, for her enthusiasm and guidance throughout the three years of this book's gestation; and Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director, and the staff of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai for their cooperation.

Pratapaditya Pal
May 2008

1 As quoted in Irvin C. Schick, *The Erotic Margin*, London: Verso, 1999, pp. 23–24.

We have been Sindhis for 5,000 years, Muslims for 500 years, and Pakistanis for only 40 years. Sufi Sindh does not fit into an Islamic Pakistan.

– G.M. Syed, c. 1987[1]

Wherever you find your people, call it home. Wherever you find Sindhis, call it your Sind.

– Prabhu Wafa (b. 1915)[2]

Introduction

Pratapaditya Pal

◆ 1 ◆

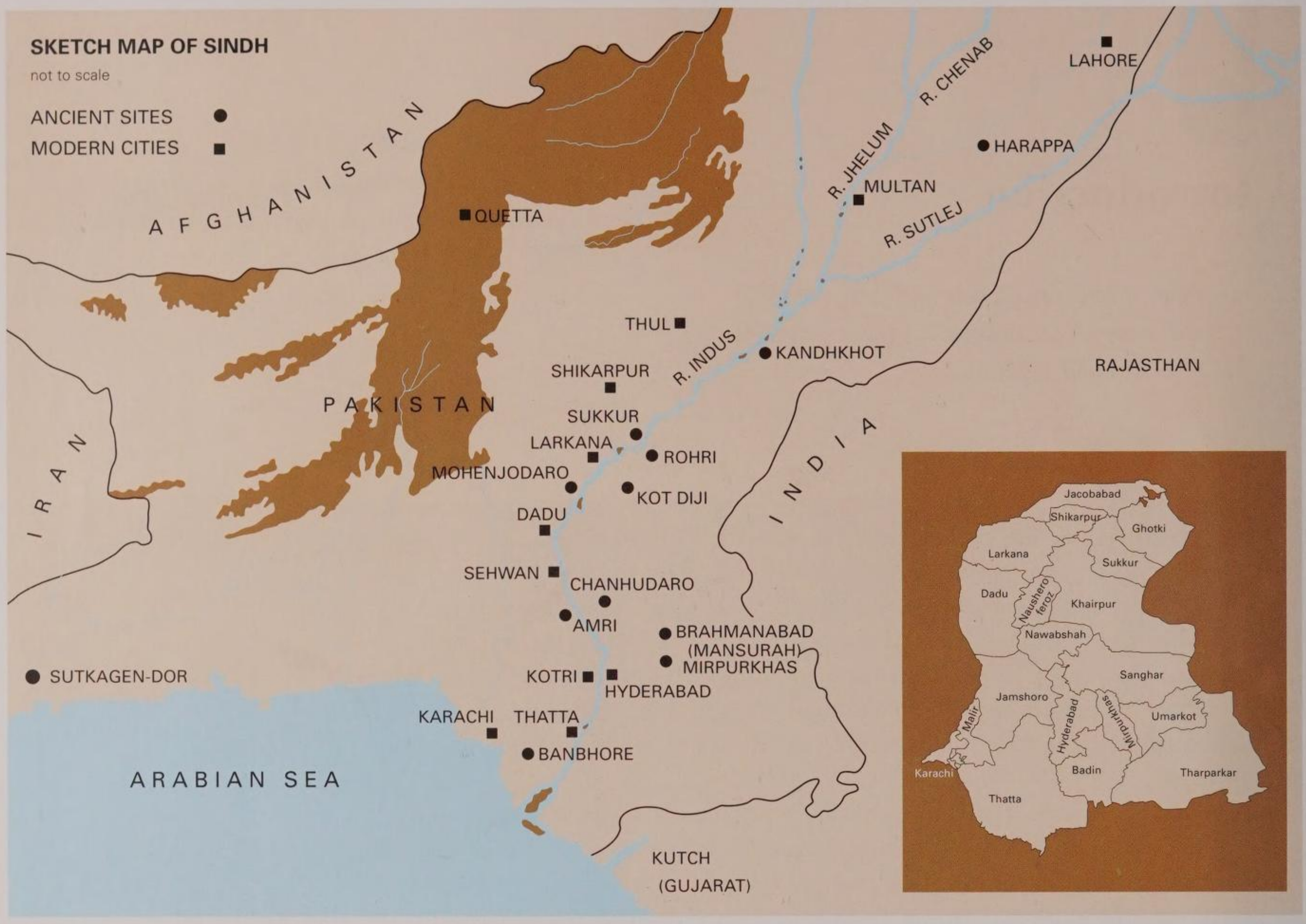
Sindh (also Sind or Sindhu in Sanskrit) is the name of the southeastern province of Pakistan. It borders on Punjab in the northeast, Rajasthan and Kutch/Gujarat in India in the southeast and south, the Arabian Sea and Baluchistan in the west and north. It is the country through which the great river Indus flows to the sea and it also contains a major part of the largest desert in the subcontinent known as the Thar, where in the 16th century as the defeated Mughal ruler Humayun was on the run, his wife gave birth to a son, Akbar, who grew up to be one of the greatest emperors of the subcontinent.

Although Sindh is no longer a part of the Indian nation, it very much remains a part of the Indian psyche. For one thing the state is remembered every time an Indian sings the national anthem. One of the song's lines, enumerating the various regions of the subcontinent, includes Sindhu.[3] The Sanskrit word Sindhu also denotes the river Indus and is used generically for any large body of water. Not only is this word responsible for the expression Hindu, but also for India, the name of the country. Persians called the people living on and beyond the river Sindhu, Hindus by substituting the "s" for "h" and the Greeks in turn dropped the "h" and settled for Indus.

Moreover, when Sindh was annexed to the Bombay Presidency by the British Indian government in 1843, Sindhis migrated to the major Indian cities, but specially to Bombay (now Mumbai) in search of trade and jobs. But that movement pales in comparison to the mass flight of the Sindhi Hindus that occurred as a result of Partition in 1947 when over a million were forced to leave Sindh for India and beyond. Today the diasporic Sindhis are a prosperous people spread not only all over India but around the globe.

It was after Sindh's merger with Bombay Presidency that a very close nexus developed between the two port cities of Bombay and Karachi, though trade contacts along the coast were millennia old. Parsi merchants from Bombay came and settled in Karachi while Ismaili merchants went to Bombay. Karachi served as the first capital of the newly created Pakistan in 1947 until that honour was bestowed upon Islamabad in 1962. Recently Karachi has been very much in the news with the violence following the return of Benazir Bhutto, an ex-prime minister, to Pakistan and her subsequent assassination. She was a daughter of Sindh.

1 *opposite*
"From the Top of the Round Tower, Fort Hyderabad", by Lieutenant William Edwards, lithographed by Charles Haghe. From Edwards' *Sketches in Scinde*, 1846. Reissued by Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2004.



2
Sketch-map of Sindh province with (*inset*) a map of the districts.

Sindh has remained in the Indian consciousness for many other reasons. This is where the first discoveries of what has become known as the Indus Valley Civilization or Harappa Culture were made (see articles by Dilip Chakrabarti and Pratapaditya Pal). Discovered in the 1920s, the site was Mohenjodaro which, with Harappa in Punjab a later discovery, remains the best-known venue of a sophisticated urban civilization that radically changed Indian history. Today the evidence of that civilization has been found over a wide swathe of the subcontinent. But the name of Mohenjodaro retains an unparalleled resonance and romance.

Although best known, Mohenjodaro is not the only Harappan site in Sindh. Other prehistoric sites well known to archaeologists are Chanhudaro, Amri, and Kot Diji, all of which have contributed to the antiquity and richness of Sindh's cultural heritage. However, evidence of even older settlements and cultures going back to the Neolithic and Paleolithic periods has been discovered at various locations near Karachi as well as in the Rohri hills. But it is the achievements of the people of Amri, Kot Diji, Mohenjodaro, and Chanhudaro that earned Sindh an exalted position on the map of early civilizations in the known world, along with those of Egyptians, Minoans, Mesopotamians, and others. With the rivers Nile, the Euphrates and Tigris, the Indus too became celebrated for having nurtured a highly sophisticated urban civilization between the 4th and 2nd millennia BCE.

Sindh is also the first region in the subcontinent where Islam took its roots as early as the 8th century CE, which is another

3
The Arabic script of Sindhi.

reason why the province must loom large in any history of the subcontinent and of the Indian nation. While Islam did not make headway into the rest of the subcontinent until after the 11th century, the Muslim Arabs' arrival in Sindh as early as the 8th century had a profound effect on the region's polity and culture. Apart from the violence and insurgency it generated among the native populations, who were Hindus and Buddhists, it introduced not only a new religion but a new language, a new script, new architecture, and new ideologies. These profoundly affected all Sindhis who, in due course, abandoned their earlier Saindhavi script derived from Brahmi and adopted the Arabic script – the only major region and Sanskrit-derived vernacular to do so (figure 3). Islamic literature too profoundly influenced Sindhi language, literature, music, and cuisine. While ultimately Buddhism disappeared from Sindh as it did elsewhere on the subcontinent, the Hindus of Sindh under the influence of the strong Sufi tradition developed a special reverence for Muslim saints and their tombs and memorials. Thus, despite the continued hostility, a certain amount of assimilation was inevitable when the two cultures lived together for more than twelve centuries. It is almost ironic though that the people who had invented the earliest Indian form of writing – the still undeciphered Indus scripts – should three millennia later abandon their traditional script for a foreign one.

This collection of thirteen essays of varying length attempts to provide a selective overview of more than 5,000 years of Sindh's material culture and artistic heritage with new perspectives and new voices. Appropriately it begins with a brief review of prehistoric Sindh (by Chakrabarti) which is no easy task as the literature on the period is vast. As is now well-known, in these times of environmental concerns, Mohenjodaro remains a shining example of prudent urban planning and sanitary arrangements, both public and private, of civic architecture, of thriving trade and commerce, and of all the technical skills that are necessary to sustain a viable and flourishing urban community that would be the envy of most municipalities in today's Pakistan and India. The reason for the decline of the Indus civilization is said to have been due largely to the rage of the monsoons and the very river that gave its name to the country. Even if the later generations of Sindhis and Indians forgot the lessons of the sophisticated urbanity and civic and social achievement of the people who created the Indus civilization, many of the cultural traits live on in contemporary Pakistan and India – to cite a few examples only, the bullock cart (see Chakrabarti, figure 10), the love of ornaments, especially layers of bangles (see Pal, figure 4), the reverence for the svastika symbol (see Chakrabarti, figure 9), the bodhi tree, and the bull, among other animals (figure 4), the use of conch shells as libation vessels, veneration for the Pleiades or Krittika.

4

Unicorn seal, Mohenjodaro, 2000 BCE or earlier. White fired glazed steatite; 5.08 x 5.08 cm. National Museum, Karachi, NMP 50.192. Photograph © J.M. Kenoyer, courtesy Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.

◆ 2 ◆

The early history and heritage of historical Sindh are not as rich as those of its prehistoric period as evidenced by the Indus sites discussed above. While the river Sindhu is familiar to the authors of the early Vedic literature known as the *samhita*, Sindh as a geo-polity is unknown. However, by the time of the Buddha in the 6th–5th century BCE, Sindh was well established as a political entity called a *mahajanapada*. In the literature of the period such as the two great epics – *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* – Sindhu is coupled with the kingdom of Sauvira. Jayadratha the ruler of Sindhu was the brother-in-law of the Kauravas. Generally, the upper region around Multan was known as Sauvira and the lower as Sindh. This is also how the kingdom is alluded to consistently in the Puranic literature and in some early inscriptions such as that issued by the Kshatrapa ruler Rudradaman (c. 130–150 CE).[4]

The first epigraphic reference to Sindh comes not from inscriptions in India but from Persia. An inscription of the Achaemenid emperor Darius I (r. c. 522–486 BCE) – a contemporary of the Buddha – includes the word "Hindu" as a geographical term which is generally taken to mean Sindhu, in which case the region, along with Gandhara, mentioned in another inscription, would have formed part of the Achaemenid empire.[5] It is possible, however, that this Hindu refers to the Multan region or Sauvira rather than the lower Indus, as later on Darius sent a naval expedition to explore the Indus. It was during the Achaemenid rule that Sindh may have had the first major taste of Iranian culture. The Achaemenid occupation of the Indian soil would bring two centuries later Alexander the Macedonian conqueror to the Indus, down which he sailed, a thwarted if not defeated emperor. The inhabitants of Sindh then had their first encounters with the Greeks and peoples of western Asia.

The history of Sindh between Alexander's invasion and the conquest by the Muslim Arabs in 711 CE is vague and unclear to say the least. Neither literary evidence nor much material culture exists to sketch a coherent narrative with any certitude. Suffice it to say that it must have been dominated by the Indo-Greeks and the Mauryas, especially the great emperor Ashoka (r. c. 268–233 BCE). However, while epigraphic evidence of Ashoka's presence exists further south in Girnar in Gujarat, no such document has been found in Sindh, notwithstanding the claims of Xuanzang (Hsuen-Tsang, 7th century CE), as discussed below. The region's history begins to take some shape in the 2nd century BCE principally through coins, which form the subject of Shailendra Bhandare's chapter in this volume. Through the evidence of coinage, the author succinctly and cogently constructs a chronological framework of the political vicissitudes of Sindh down to the British conquest. What can be said with certainty is that Sindh's independent existence after throwing off the Achaemenid yoke did not last long. Apart from the Mauryas, an indigenous dynasty, the territory must have been ruled continuously by one foreign dynasty after another until the fall of Kushan power in the 3rd century CE. It did not form a province of the Gupta empire (320–c. 550) but was a tributary and likely absorbed cultural influences from the Gupta realm, as is clear from the artistic evidence discussed by this writer, and by Sabyasachi Mukherjee.

The most extensive information about Sindh is provided by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang who travelled across the subcontinent between 630 and 644. Although he claims to have passed through the region, his account is not altogether accurate.[6] He describes the country as 7,000 *li* in circuit (1 *li* is approximately 500 metres) and mentions the name of the capital which however cannot be identified though Cunningham's identification with Alor may

be correct. In any event, as the pilgrim noted, both Buddhism and Brahmanism were flourishing "and the various sectaries lived pell-mell" which implies that the communities were not segregated. He does mention that the Buddha had visited the country, which is incorrect. The allusions to the visit of Buddha's disciple Upagupta and the erection of stupas by Ashoka are more credible. However, while Xuanzang did come across Ashokan stupas in Kashmir, he does not mention having seen any in Sindh. It is worth remarking that the ruins of a major stupa of brick have been discovered at Mohenjodaro. Likely, Xuanzang had visited the monastery at Mirpurkhas, to date the most important Buddhist remains uncovered in the region.

What is significant is that the form of Buddhism flourishing in Sindh was the Hinayana or Sravakayana with several hundred monasteries and over ten thousand "brethren". Also interesting is Xuanzang's mention of "myriad families of ferocious disposition", who were cattle-farmers but did not hesitate to take life and lived in the low marshes. At the same time they wore the garb of Buddhist bhikshus and "reviled the 'Great Vehicle'" or the Mahayana.

More credible is his account of the products and people of Sindh:

> The products of the country were early wheat (in B Text, millet and wheat), gold, silver and *t'u shih* [brass], and it had oxen, and sheep, and dromedaries, and mules; it yielded also various kinds of salt, red, white and black, and a white rock salt; the people of various countries used the salt as medicine. The inhabitants of the country were quick-tempered but upright, quarrelsome and vituperative and of superficial learning; they were thorough believers in Buddhism.[7]

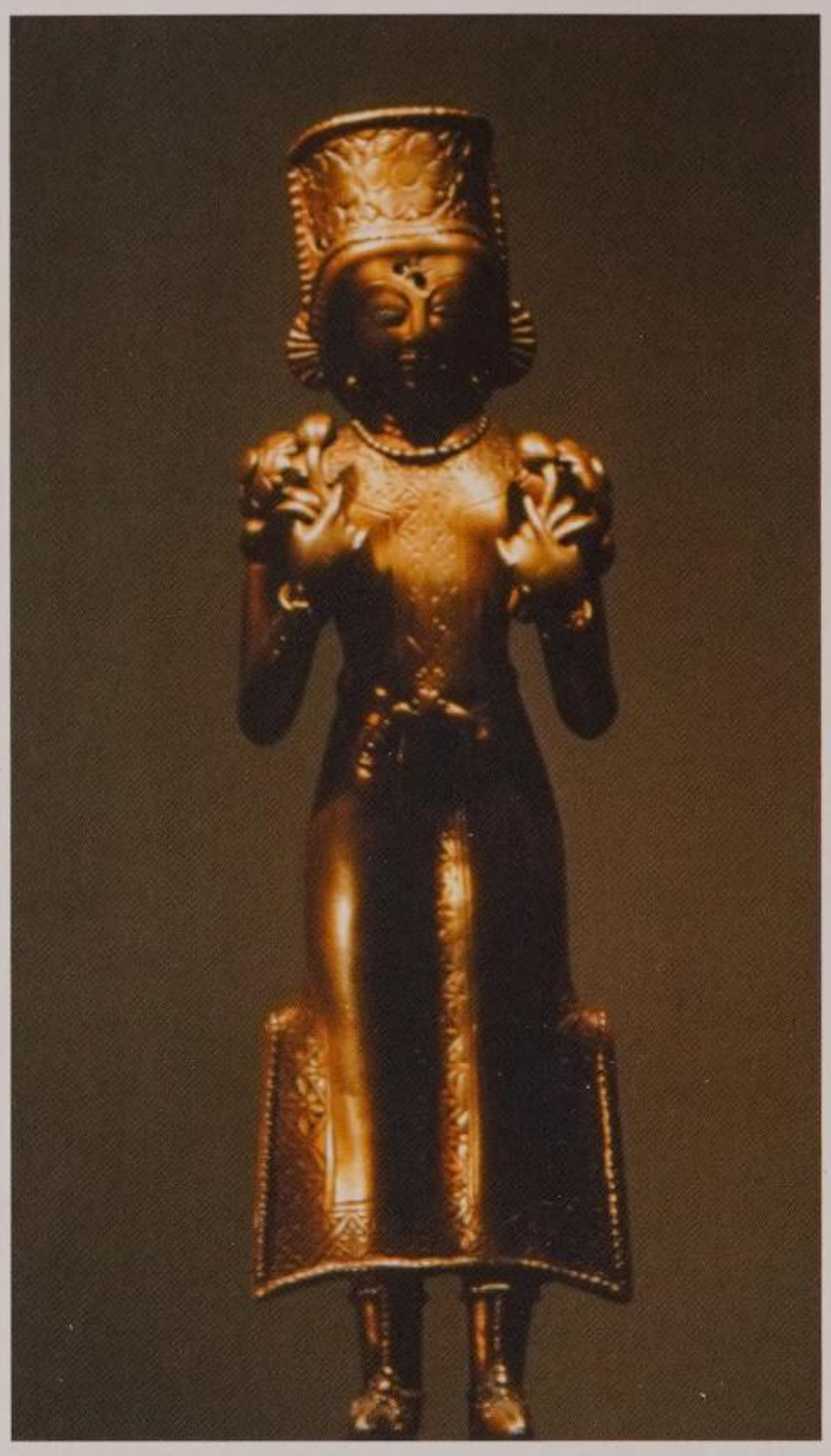
Indeed, though not copious, more Buddhist art than Brahmanical and Jain has survived in Sindh.

As in other parts of the subcontinent, religion was the principal patron as well as inspiration for art and architecture. That Buddhism was popular in Sindh is clear and the surviving artistic heritage (see chapters by Pal and Mukherjee) demonstrates that the stupa and the Buddha were the principal focus of worship, thereby confirming the assertion of the Chinese pilgrim Yi Jing (I-Tsing, 673–c. 692 [?]) that the followers of the Sammitiya school (of Sravakayana or Hinayana association) were predominant.[8] Mukherjee's essay on the rich remains of Mirpurkhas not only discusses the relation between art and religion at the site but also provides fresh insights on the architectural character of the great Buddhist structure.

There is little or no evidence of the prevalence of the Jain religion, either literary or plastic. With Sindh's proximity to both Rajasthan and Gujarat, where Jainism was already flourishing by the 5th century, if not earlier, it is difficult to believe that the Jains, either the teachers or the merchants, avoided Sindh, especially as it was an important centre of seaborne trade.

The surviving artistic evidence of Brahmanical religions is also not very extensive. That Shiva was an important deity and his temple in the capital of Debal was a national shrine is clear from Arab sources and the archaeological remains (see Ibrahim Shah's essay). Shiva was principally worshipped in his linga form and no anthropomorphic images have yet been found.

As has been noted in my article, the recovery of a magnificent large brass image of Brahma from the vicinity of Mirpurkhas demonstrates that at least one major shrine to this deity existed in the settlement. Such an impressive metal sculpture could only have served as a shrine's principal image (*vigraha*), as was the case in Kashmir, and still is in the temples of Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. It may be mentioned that the famous pilgrimage site of Brahma is Pushkar



5

Surya, replica of the wooden sculpture in the Sun temple of Multan?, 7th–8th century. Brass; 50.4 cm. ©The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Katharine Holden Thayer, 1965.557. Photograph: P. Pal.

near Ajmer in Rajasthan, where a great animal fair is an annual event. Incidentally, the Mirpurkhas Brahma is the most ambitious metal representation of this deity found so far on the subcontinent.

The evidence for the worship of Vishnu in pre-Islamic Sindh is not much more abundant than those of the other two members of the triad. Vaishnava emblems such as the wheel and lotus and the character "shri" occur on coins of the 5th–6th century (see Bhandare). This is also the period when, due to imperial patronage of the Guptas over most of northern India, Vaishnavism, especially the Pancharatra order, must have expanded, even in those regions such as Sindh, which were not directly ruled by the Guptas. One piece of archaeological evidence survives in the fragments of a stone Vishnu icon from Banbhore (see Mumtaz Currim's article) noticed by the late Professor van Lohuizen.[9] It is likely a sculpture of the 5th century and what is revealing is the manner in which the extended left hand of Vishnu holds the conch. Grasping the shell with the fingers inserted in the opening clearly reflects the mode preferred in contemporaneous Gujarat, which was already a well-known centre of Vaishnavism. And the ports of Sindh were certainly in contact with Dwarka, the pre-eminent centre of the faith in Gujarat. Curiously, some evidence for the prevalence of Vaishnavism in the early period of Islamic rule in the 9th–10th century is provided by Emirate coins, as discussed by Bhandare.

The Emirate coinage also bears legends such as "Jayanta-raja" and "Mihiradeva" which likely allude to the famous temple of the Sun god Surya at Multan. Now in Pakistan's Punjab province, Multan was until the 19th century part of Sindh. Indeed, ever since its foundation, at least as early as the Saka period of the 1st century BCE, if not earlier, Multan's Sun temple was the most famous in the subcontinent. According to mythology it was founded by Krishna's grandson Samba to celebrate his being cured of leprosy by the grace of the Sun god. It was also Samba who entrusted the worship of the deity to Maga or Magian priests brought from Sakastan or Seistan in southern Persia. The myth probably cloaks a historical event that took place during Saka or Scythian rule. In any event, as is mentioned by Bhandare, some debased gold coins issued shortly before the Arab conquest of 711 bear the legend "Ranaditya", a direct allusion to the patron deity of Multan. A large but damaged stele of the Sun god of about the 11th century, showing influences from the Pratihara realm, was discovered from Brahmanabad whose present location is uncertain.

We do not know what the original image in the Multan temple looked like but the textual sources describe it as a wooden sculpture. According to Muslim historians Zaid and Masudi, expensive aloes wood from Cambodia, probably brought through Sindh ports, were used in the Sun temple

of Multan. One wonders if the well-known brass sculpture now in the Cleveland Museum (figure 5) isn't a replica of the famous Multan Surya. When first published it was thought to be from Kashmir, which was subsequently endorsed by this writer.[10] My own conviction now, especially in view of the Mirpurkhas Brahma, is that the Cleveland Surya is a creation of Multan and therefore yet another fine example of Sindhi metalwork of the 7th–8th century.

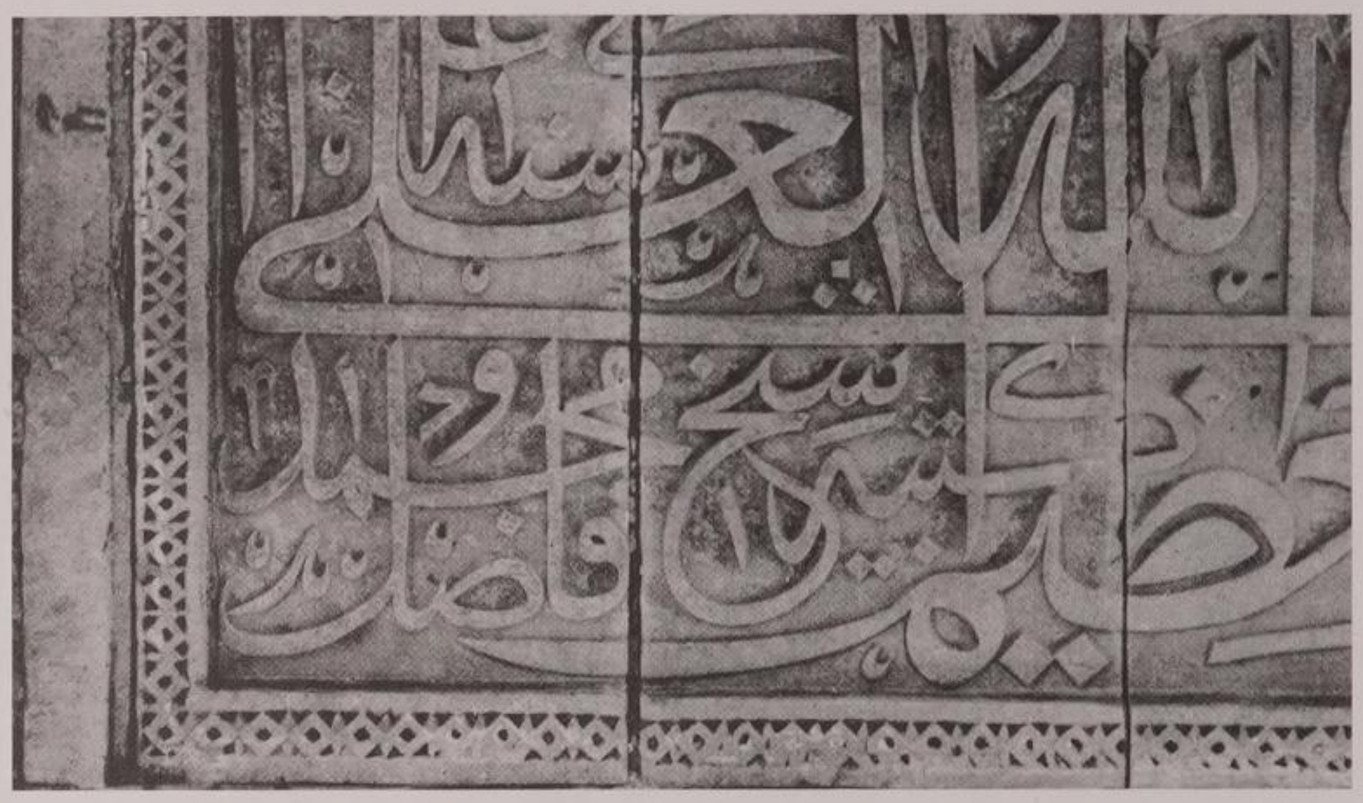
Little archaeological evidence has survived from the historical period of the worship of the goddess in Sindh. However, the antiquity of the practice is well attested from the prehistory of the region and goddesses were certainly prominent in the Indus civilization (see Pal, pp. 53–54). It should also be pointed out that the famous shrine of the Goddess at Hinglaj now in the desert of Baluchistan was an important pilgrimage for the Sindhis. The city of Karachi is the starting point of the arduous pilgrimage to Hinglaj. The worship of the goddess Nana, the presiding deity of Hinglaj, was both ancient and widespread from Sindh across Baluchistan into Iran.[11]

◆ 3 ◆

The history and culture of Sindh altered radically because of the Arab conquest in 711. Thus, the inhabitants of Sindh were the first on the subcontinent to encounter Islamic civilization, which, however, was still in its formative stage. Islam itself, as a religious, political, and cultural force, was established by the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632) in Arabia (present-day Saudi Arabia) less than a century before its arrival in Sindh. Only a year earlier in 710 the Arabs had reached Spain in Europe and by 712 had taken Toledo, the capital of the Visigoths.

The political and cultural history of the Islamic period of Sindh is better known than the earlier period thanks to the greater interest in geography and history among the Arabs. The Arabs themselves were not strangers to the Sindhis, though they were familiar as traders rather than military conquerors, but of course, Islam was a new phenomenon. Sindh's exposure to Islam has been the longest and it is also the only region of the subcontinent that was governed by foreign rulers – the Arab caliphate – continuously over four centuries until the arrival of the Ghaznavid conqueror Mahmud (r. 997–1030). It was in Mahmud's train that the great Islamic polymath Al-Biruni (b. 973) came to India, visited Sindh and especially Multan, and left an extensive, erudite, and remarkably informative account of the country including Sindh.

The conquest of Sindh by the Arabs and the subsequent political development have been briefly outlined in the chapters by Bhandare and Alka Patel. Indeed, with the help of coins Bhandare provides a brief narrative of the rulers of Sindh down to the British period. The first part of Patel's chapter, devoted to an account of the Islamic architecture of Sindh, also analyses the circumstances that provided the pretext for the Arab conquest of the region, as recounted in the Arabic *Chachnama*, a 13th-century narrative of the early Arab history of the kingdom. The essay further furnishes a brief overview of the geopolitical context for the early development of the Islamic architecture of Sindh before discussing the surviving monuments. It should be stressed that, like the Brahmanical or Hindu structures of the region, the early Islamic architecture has also suffered a similar fate and is available to us mostly in ruins. What is noteworthy is the continued use of both wood and clay in Sindhi architecture and the glorious application of glazed coloured tiles, a mode of ornamentation that may well have influenced the Islamic architecture of other regions on the subcontinent. While Patel's chapter provides an overview of the Islamic architecture of Sindh, Currim concentrates on a single settlement – the Banbhore palimpsest, identified with the more ancient



6
A band of Quranic verses in Naskh carved in relief, Shahi Masjid, Thatta, 1692. From M.A. Ghafur, *The Calligraphers of Thatta,* Institute of Central & West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, 1978.

port city of Debal. It has remained a controversial site ever since its first notice by Alexander Cunningham towards the end of the 19th century, but extensive excavations undertaken by the Pakistan Archaeological Department in the 1950s and '60s have unearthed rich evidence of the material culture of the Islamic period that is woven together here to yield a cohesive narrative.

Among the most spectacular finds at Banbhore are superb examples of Islamic calligraphy of the late Caliphate period, especially of both regular and floriated Kufic variety in stone. For both quality of carving and form these examples not only testify to the extraordinary skills of the Sindhi engravers but are among the finest specimens of Kufic calligraphy surviving in the subcontinent, or for that matter comparable with anything produced in the contemporaneous Islamic world in western Asia. One can assume that similar high standards of calligraphy, an art that defines the genius of Islam more than any other examples of material culture, must also have been achieved by the pen on paper, had examples of the *Quran* and other literary works survived. Coins remain a primary source today to study the continuous development of Islamic calligraphy in Sindh (see Bhandare). Fragments of calligraphy on ceramics discovered at Banbhore also are an important source for the study of early Islamic writing in Sindh.

Another site that is rich for the study of later Islamic calligraphy, especially Naskh and Nastaliq of the Sultanate period, is the necropolis of the Beglars at Miyan Wahyun, about 61 kilometres northeast of Hyderabad, known at the time as Turki.[12] Amir Sayyid Qasim migrated to Sindh during the rule of Shah Hasan Arghun in the early 1520s from Samarkand which was also the place of origin of the Arghuns. The Beglar family not only played an "important role in the socio-political history of southern Sindh during the rule of the Arghans, Turkhans and the Mughals",[13] but they were also great patrons of the arts and literature. Carved from yellow sandstone, the cenotaphs, beautifully decorated with floral and geometric motifs and inscriptions exhibit similar workmanship to that seen on graves at Makli Hill near Thatta. As noted by the scholars Ali and Khan, Thatta was likely an important centre of stone carving at the time (figure 6). Although not abundant, enough material remains to sketch an interesting account of the development of Islamic calligraphy in Sindh. That the stone-carvers of Sindh continued to excel in stone-carving as late as the 17th century is evident from another group of cenotaphs that survive at Chaukhandi (see Patel). Although the carvings are not calligraphic but of lively and luxuriant geometrical forms, they clearly demonstrate the dexterity and imaginative flair of the Sindhi stone carvers (figure 7).

If pre-Islamic written sources for the study of Sindhi society and culture are meagre, the Islamic period is remarkably rich. Not only do we have far more information regarding both trade and religion, but sources from this period are also useful to understand the gradual transformation of Sindhi society. We learn that products of China and Sindh "laden on huge ships constantly arrived at Malabar".[14] Broach (Bharuch) in Gujarat was a port of call for ships from China and Sindh. Among the many Sindhi products in demand was fish oil necessary for boat-building. The city of

Debal was famous for its swords. Sindh was also the source of dromedaries, as first noted by Xuanzang. Indeed, even in Mughal times Sindh remained famous for its dromedaries. Sindhi ports handled musk and costus from the Himalayas, indigo from Gujarat, and camphor and rattan from Malaya and Sumatra. Among imports from the Arab world were horses, which were also locally bred, and dates. Perhaps the most curious native product exported from Sindh to Zebag was perfumed rats (muskrats). Thus, the Muslim writers not only provide fascinating accounts of the bustling ports of Sindh but also delineate a picture of the cosmopolitan nature of the coastal settlements.

We have already noted the interaction of the Muslims and local Sindhis that led to the adoption of the Arabic script for the Sindhi language, which too came under the influence of Islam. Sindh must also have played a significant role in the development of Indian music. As discussed by the historian S.M. Ikram, during the

7
Cenotaphs at Chaukhandi, 17th century. Photograph: Nandita Bhavnani.

8

Autographed portrait of Sir Charles Napier, by Lieutenant William Edwards, lithographed by Charles Haghe. From Edwards' *Sketches in Scinde*, 1846. Reissued by Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2004.

Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphates, there was a very fruitful exchange of intellectual ideas and learning between the Arabs and the Sindhis. "Sind", writes Ikram, "became the link through which the fruits of Indian learning were transmitted to the Arabs, and by them made available to the rest of the civilized world."[15] As early as 771 a Hindu astronomer and mathematician from Sindh went to Baghdad with the *Brahma Siddhanta* of Brahmagupta which, known to the Arabs as "Sindhind", exerted enormous influence on the development of Arab astronomy. What is known today in the West as "Arabic numerals" was in fact referred to as "Indian numerals" (*al-ruqum-al-Hindiyyah*). Similarly, Indian medicine and pharmacopoeia as well as astrology and palmistry reached the Arab world through the instrumentality of Sindh. In music too the exchange of ideas was mutually beneficial. While Indian books on melodies were known among the Arabs, many Persian and Arabic musical forms such as *Nauroz*, *Yeman*, *Hijaz*, and *Zanuglah* were incorporated into Indian music.

It was, however, in the religious sphere that the greatest interaction took place. The influence of the Islamic Sufi orders in Sindhi society was profound. The Sufi order of the Suhrawardis was founded in Multan as a consequence of the meeting between native-born Bahauddin Zakariya and the mystic Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi of Persia (d. 1263).The latter's teachings were carried by his disciple Makhdum Lal Shahbaz Qalandar who was called Raja Bharatri and revered by Hindus. A well-known native Sufi saint of Sindh was Maggar Pir known to Hindus as Lala Jas Raj. The tombs of these pirs became popular among pilgrims of both communities. These few instances will suffice to demonstrate how, even as the political relations between the two communities were fraught with animosity and distrust, simultaneously at the grassroots level amity prevailed in religious matters. The prolonged association of the two communities and the less strident and more tolerant attitudes of the Sufis with their emphasis on the cult of the saints may have contributed to the fact that the caste system among Hindu Sindhis was less rigid than elsewhere on the subcontinent and that the Sindhi Hindu community has fewer brahmans.

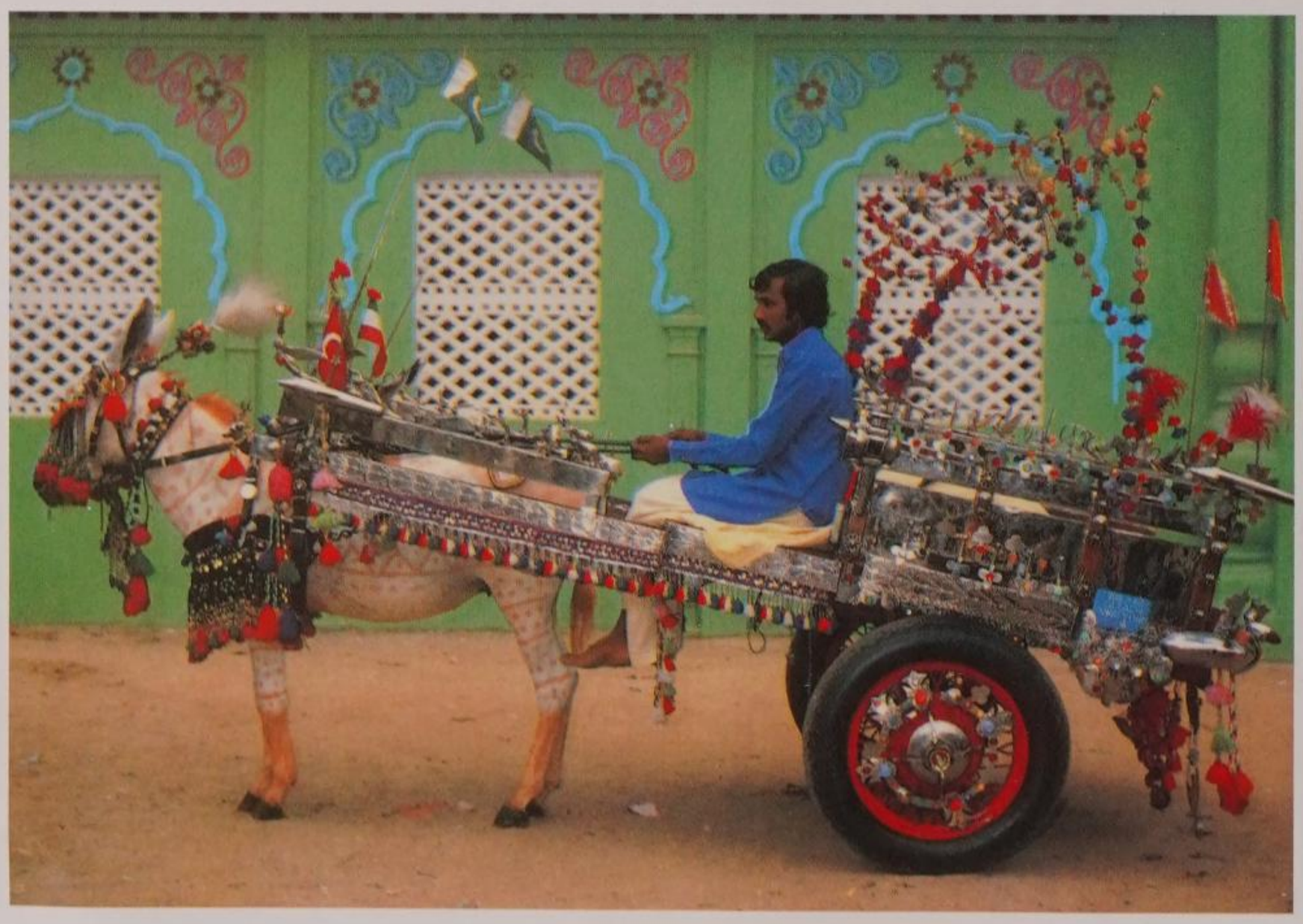
One of the most curious literary documents of Sindh is the *Dasa Avatara* or Ten Avatars of Pir Shams, the first major Ismaili pir who is buried in Multan.[16] Sindh became associated with Ismailism as early as 883 but Pir Shams lived in the 13th century. The adoption of Vishnu's avatar theory to advance the Islamic cause was a brilliant idea. The coming of the tenth avatar of Vishnu as Kalki is akin to the Islamic Mahdi concept. Adopting the idea, Pir Shams asserted that "the last incarnation of Vishnu was indeed 'Ali, thus superimposing the Shia's form of Islam upon a Hindu Vaishnava structure."[17]

◆ 4 ◆

If the Islamic conquest of Sindh in 711 was initiated by a false pretext, that of the British in 1843 was ignominious. The conqueror Major-General Sir Charles Napier (figure 8) himself admitted that the British had no right to take Sindh and characterized the annexation an act of "rascality". Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that the annexation had its benefits as well, both material and intellectual. One of these was the interest the British took in digging up the history and prehistory of Sindh. A remarkable fallout of the British presence in India was the interest European scholars and artists took in recording both in words and pictures the sights and sites of the country. Sindh was no exception and beginning as early as 1846, only three years after the annexation, the remarkable document *Sketches in Scinde* (figures 1 and 8) was published. This and subsequent publications, discussed by Rosemary Raza in this volume,

9

Decorated truck.
Photograph: Ameer Hamza.



10

Decorated donkey cart.
Picture postcard. Courtesy
S. Makhijani.

11

Peacock vase, Bombay School pottery, late 19th or early 20th century. 81.5 cm. Collection of Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai.

12

Ornamental vase, Multan, c. 1880. Terracotta with blue and turquoise glaze; 60.3 cm. Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena. Gift of Pratap and Chitra Pal.

offer an informative and graphic overview of the British representations of Sindh as well as its cultural achievements, that is yet to be surpassed.

The rich and varied tradition of crafts in Sindh has a long history going back to the Indus civilization. In modern times Sir George Birdwood was the first to comment on the diverse forms of crafts and artefacts in various media, many of the objects having been displayed in the European exhibitions of the second half of the 19th century.[18] It is a matter of regret that in the intervening period since Birdwood wrote his book in 1880, no comprehensive account of the past or living traditions of crafts of Sindh has been undertaken. A beginning is made in this volume with a brief review of the contemporary textile manufacture in the region by Noorjehan Bilgrami. As she notes, not only does the living textile tradition of Sindh reveal remarkable links with the Indus civilization but it also demonstrates spatial connections with the textile traditions of its neighbours such as Baluchistan, Punjab, Kutch, and Rajasthan.

13

Jhulelal, also known as Uderolal, patron god of the river Indus. Courtesy N. Makhijani.

The popular arts of Sindh too remain to be examined. As observable in Pakistan, one important vehicle of popular aesthetic expression may be seen in public transportation, as is the case in the colourful rickshaws in Bangladesh. Here we illustrate an overloaded truck whose load too contributes to the picturesqueness of the composition (figure 9). The second illustration is a donkey cart fit for a prince. Such decorated donkey carts still ply the streets of rural Sindh (figure 10). The desire to adorn their vehicles probably stems from an urge to compensate for the restrictions imposed upon visual expression in Islam.

Sindhi influence on the arts of neighbouring Kutch and Rajasthan – specially in embroidery, lacquer, music, and poetry – have been considerable and need to be seriously studied. Certainly, after the annexation of Sindh by the British, the closer nexus between Sindh and the Bombay Presidency led to the development of new experiments in art. Sindh's tradition of glazed ceramic ware as exemplified by a vase included here (figure 12) was influential in developing the ceramic production of the Bombay School of Arts (figure 11).

Like other major metropolises of the subcontinent – Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta (now Kolkata), and Madras (now Chennai) – the best known city of Sindh,

Karachi, is also largely a creation of the British. It was originally named Kalachi but misplaced national fervour has not led to reversion to the old name. Karachi, of course, is the principal port of Pakistan and was the first capital where the new nationhood was proclaimed in 1947. It grew to eminence when the British transferred the capital of Sindh from Hyderabad to the port city, and continued to develop into a cosmopolitan settlement even though overshadowed by Bombay. Nandita Bhavnani throws an evocative glance at Karachi's past, both physical and cultural, that surely will kindle nostalgia among the many Karachi-ites who still survive, either in today's crowded and violence-prone megapolis, or among the diaspora communities across the globe.

While the demographics and the politics of Karachi in particular, and Sindh in general, have undergone dramatic changes since 1947, their impact on the arts and culture were less radical. Salima Hashmi provides a narrative of the development of modern art in Karachi and Sindh which began literally with the creation of the state in 1947 without the benefit of a "proto history" such as that enjoyed by Lahore, Bombay, Calcutta, or Madras during the first half of the 20th century. As Hashmi states in a colourful metaphor, "The many-layered spread of contemporary art in Sindh is patched together rather like a *ralli*, the appliquéd quilt, of pieces stitched together, some ancient, some decaying, and some new." Indeed, a quilt cover also serves as an apt visual metaphor for the traumatic Sindhi experience of 1947 when the non-Muslim Sindhis were compelled to abandon their homeland. This quilt cover known as a *lihaf* was brought out by a woman when she fled Karachi. It was used as the ground by her granddaughter Nalini Malani, an established contemporary artist, to superimpose her own artistic visions coloured as they have been by her perceptions of her past, her loss, and her troubled cultural identity. As described by Yashodhara Dalmia, it is a poignant work of art that in many ways encapsulates Sindh's epic saga that began with such promise in the valleys and banks of the river Sindhu (Indus) some five millennia ago and in a sense ended as the Sindhis say not in Independence but in Partition in 1947.

A feature of this survey of the cultural heritage of Sindh is Sherina Advani's article on Sindhi cuisine. As is the case with the chapters on Karachi and contemporary art, it too is a nostalgic account, describing Sindhi eating habits and some famous eateries in the cities and towns of Sindh. While a few of the dishes have familiar names and flavours, others are distinctly regional and local. Perhaps the most interesting to this editor, who is Bengali, is the author's discussion on the Indus Pallo fish (of the Shad family) which is familiar in Bengal as *ilish* or Hilsa. Smoked Hilsa invented in Calcutta for the British remains one of the distinctive and successful examples of the Western adaptation of a Bengali dish. However, even though the Bengali fondness for this fish is legendary, only in Sindh has the fish captured the imagination of both religion and art to become the mount of the deity Jhulelal (figure 13).

Sindh and Sindhis share a fate similar to that of Tibet and the Tibetans. Whether at home or abroad, and no matter how they prosper, they will always remain a minority without a rooted cultural identity. As in Tibet, half the population in Sindh today is non-Sindhi. 95 per cent of industrial labourers in Sindh are not natives. As the Hindus left and Muslim refugees largely from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India, known as the Mohajirs, arrived, Sindhi Muslims felt a sense of doom. Hindu properties were allotted to the incoming Mohajirs who now dominate the cities of Sindh; only in the rural areas are Sindhis in majority. This is why G.M. Syed spearheaded a separatist "Jiye Sindh" movement,

expressing the resident Sindhis' frustrations in the statement used as an epigraph to this Introduction.

In many ways the diaspora Sindhis have fared better, both in India and abroad. However, no matter how successful economically, politically, culturally, as in Bollywood, or intellectually, the issue of cultural identity will remain a problem, especially in view of the declining interest in language among the diasporic communities and even in Sindh proper. Moreover, as Murli Melwani of Taiwan has stated, Sindhis are "Hindus yet not Hindus, Sikhs yet not Sikhs, Sufis yet not Sufis."[19]

There are very few "Sindhi Hindu" temples in India. There are some Jhulelal shrines and some Guru Nanak durbars.[20] Jhulelal or Uderolal, the god of the river, is depicted as a bearded old man resembling Guru Nanak, sitting on a fish (Pallo) and is considered an incarnation (*Matsyavatar*) of Vishnu. The iconography is also reminiscent of the legendary Indian lawmaker Manu and the biblical Jonah and the whale. In Jhulelal's headdress is stuck a peacock feather, as is the case with Krishna. The first day of Chaitra (March–April) known as Cheti Chand, marks the birth anniversary of Jhulelal. The festival involves a procession and is celebrated usually at a waterfront. Apart from demonstrating the continued influence of the Vaishnava faith among Hindu Sindhis, the cult of Jhulelal is also indicative of the spirit of syncretism that has dominated Sindhi culture. The Sadh Bela temple in Mumbai has the bowl blessed by the goddess Annapurna which was brought from the Sadh Bela temple in Sukkur. But as has been said, perhaps of necessity the Sindhi worships where his neighbour does.[21]

In the flood of migration after Partition, an entire new settlement of Sindhis came up at Ulhasnagar near Bombay, that was promptly dubbed Sindhunagar. Today it is part of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and other communities are also settled here, but it continues to be a Sindhi bastion where one can sample Sindhi cuisine. Fresh efforts are being made by Sindhi cultural groups to revive an interest in Sindhi language and culture, as for instance by a theatre group called Sindhu Sakhaa Entertainment. Enterprising filmmakers too have been experimenting with films in Sindhi or "Singlish".

Other diasporic Sindhi communities are trying to revive interest in Sindhi culture through world Sindhi Sammelans or conventions but whether such efforts will be successful remains to be seen. Nowhere has the angst and despair of the Sindhi people, who were the first in the subcontinent to develop a great civilization 5,000 years ago, been better expressed than in the following poem by Professor K.N. Vaswani:[22]

> We, the Sindhi people
> scattered throughout the length and
> breadth of India,
> exiled for no fault of our own,
> from our homeland Sindh;
>
> We, the Sindhi people,
> sons and daughters of the Sindhu,
> of the sacred soil, which was the cradle,
> of the earliest culture in the world,
> The ancient Civilisation of Mohen-Jo-
> Daro; …
>
> We, the Sindhi people,
> who have stood the ravages of ages,
> the many invasions and storms,
> been beaten, but remained unbowed,
> been conquered, but remained
> unconquerable in spirit; …
>
> We, the Sindhi people,
> singled out by Providence,
> to make the supreme sacrifice of the
> whole of our homeland,
> are not forgotten orphans in a
> Free India,
> for which the sacrifice was made; … .

NOTES

1 *Amil Samachar*, bilingual monthly paper (English and Sindhi), Vol. 17, No. 10, Mumbai, January 2005.

2 From *Freedom and Fissures: An Anthology of Sindhi Partition Poetry*, translated by Anju Makhija and Menka Shivdasani with Arjan Mirchandani, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1998.)

3 *Punjab-sindhu gujarata maratha*.

4 Dines Chandra Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), p. 178. See also A.H. Dani, "Sindhu-Sauvira" in Hamida Khuhro, ed., *Sind Through the Centuries* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 35–42.

5 Sircar, pp. 6–7.

6 Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol. II (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1975), pp. 252–54.

7 Ibid., p. 252.

8 I-Tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago*, tr. J. Takakusu (Delhi: Munshiram, 2nd ed., 1982 [1896]), p. 9. The orthodoxy of the Buddhists in Sindh even long after the 7th century is mentioned in Tibetan sources. Both Taranath and Sum-pa mkhan-po allude to the intolerant attitudes of monks from Sindhu (*saindhava*) and Singhala or Sri Lanka (who are Theravadins) towards tantrism. Not only did they violently vilify Buddhajnanapada, the abbot of Nalanda and Vikramashila monasteries, they also destroyed a silver image of Heruka at Vajrasana, Bodhgaya. Jean Nadou, *Buddhists of Kashmir* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakshan, 1980), p. 81.

9 J.E. van Lohuizen, "The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sindh", in Khuhro, op. cit., pp. 43–57, see Pl. XIV.

10 J. E. Lee, "Clothed in the Sun: A Buddha and Surya from Kashmir", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. LIV, No. 2 (February 1967), pp. 43ff; Pratapaditya Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir* (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1975), pp. 82–83.

11 See B.N. Mukherjee, *Nana on Lion: A Study in Kushana Numismatic Art* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1969). The cult of Nana is a significant instance of the Sindhi-West Asian connection, discussed extensively in Bhandare's essay in this volume, both commercial and cultural, from the days of the Indus civilization until the British period.

12 M. Hamid Ali and Ahmad Nabi Khan, "The Necropolis of the Beglars at Miyan Wahyun, Hyderabad (Sind)", *Pakistan Archaeology*, No. 7 (1970–71), pp. 136–49.

13 Ibid., p. 136.

14 R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Struggle for Empire* (History and Culture of the Indian Peoples, Vol. 7), 4th ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1989), p. 610.

15 S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, ed. Ainslie T. Embree (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 14. In fact, the following comments in this paragraph are based on Ikram's discussion of the intellectual achievements of the Arab governance of Sindh (pp. 14–19).

16 G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of Pir Shams", in Khuhro, op. cit., pp. 143–58. The text itself composed in simple Sindhi and to be sung in Kedara raga is quoted in pp. 154–55.

17 Ibid., p. 144.

18 G.C.M. Birdwood, *The Industrial Art of India* (London: Reprint Press, 1971 [1880]).

19 From *Sindhi Jottings*, edited and published by Hiro Shroff, Mumbai, 2001.

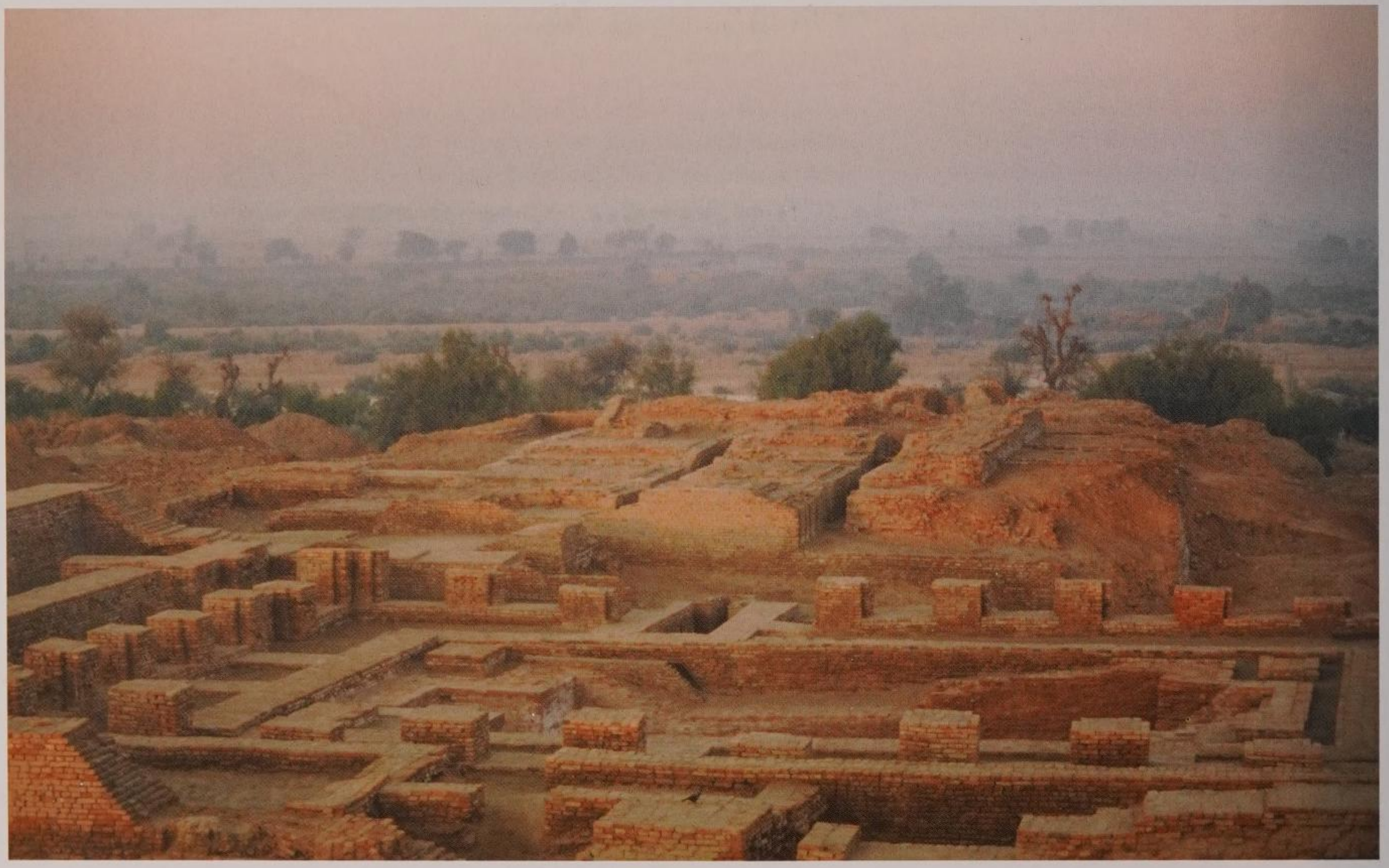
20 As is the case in Punjab, Sikhism exerted a strong influence on Hindu Sindhis. Apart from worshipping in Guru Nanak shrines, the tradition in Sindh was for the eldest son in the family to take the surname Singh and to observe the Sikh tradition of using the 5 "K"s, just as the eldest son of a Tibetan Buddhist often joined the monastery.

21 "The Sindhi", supplement in the *Afternoon Despatch & Courier*, Bombay, September 27, 1991.

22 *Amil Samachar*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Mumbai, July 2006.

1

The Great Bath, Mohenjodaro. Photograph © J.M. Kenoyer, courtesy Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.



Prehistoric Sindh

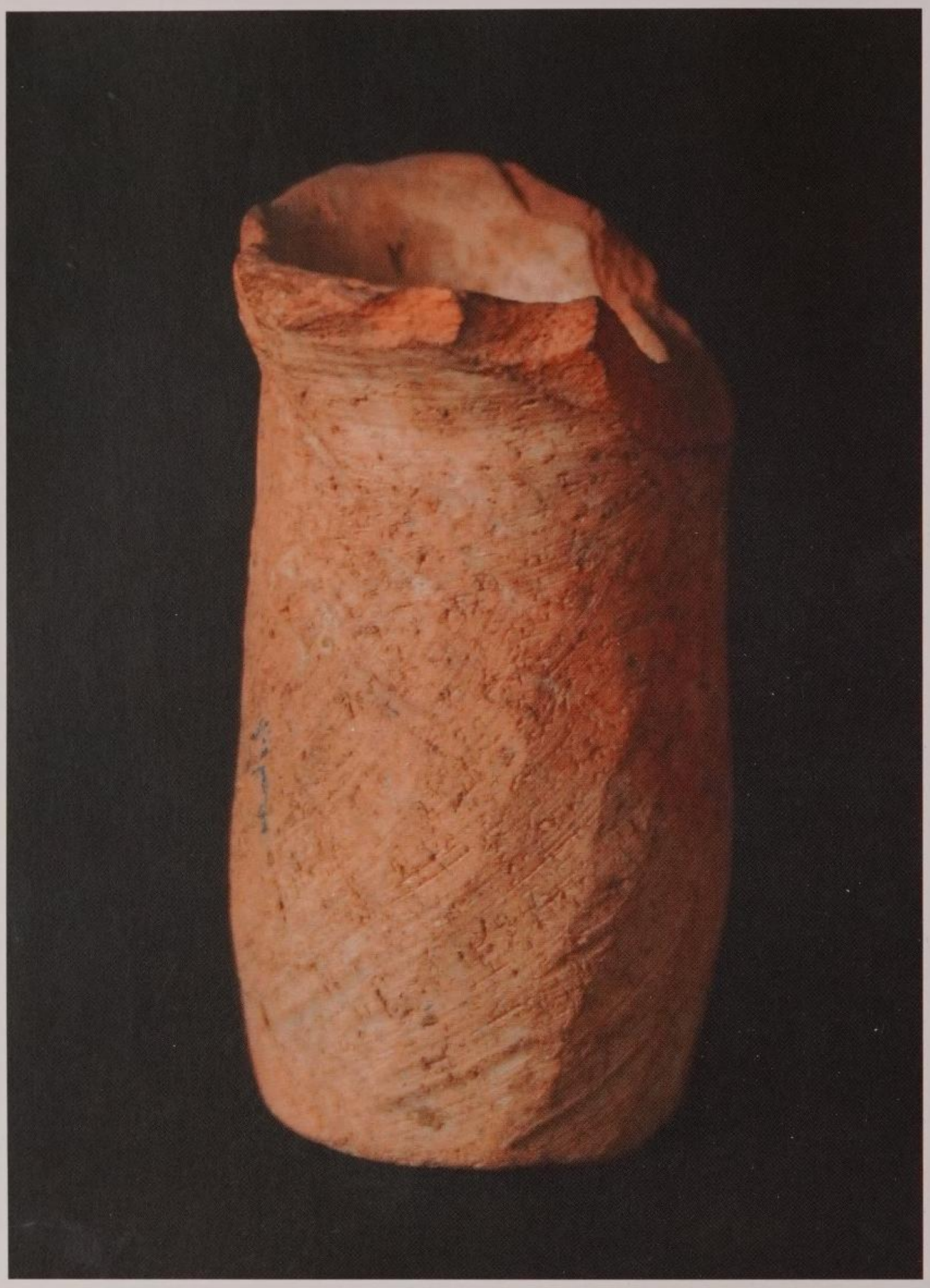
Dilip K. Chakrabarti

2
An excavated stone tool workshop in the Rohri hills. Photograph courtesy P. Biagi.

Much of our perception of prehistoric Sindh is coloured by R.D. Banerji's excavations at Mohenjodaro in 1922. While the picture of the prehistoric civilization which emerged at the site was in itself mind-boggling (figure 1), later archaeological researches in the province have added a lot of time-depth to it, discovering both its antecedents and its successors.

Evidence of the earliest human presence in Sindh is in the form of Palaeolithic stone tools which occur basically in two areas: the Sukkur-Rohri hills (figure 2) which constitute a limestone plateau of 40 x 16 km, and a similar but much smaller plateau known as Milestone 101 or, more correctly, Ongar Hill near Hyderabad in southern Sindh. The history of research on these finds dates from the 19th century, but in recent years the scholar who has published most in this field is Paolo Biagi.[1]

The plateau area at each site is full of buff or grey chert nodules with cream-coloured or dust-coloured patina, or mottled black. The cream-coloured patina is characteristic of the Indus civilization but in the Palaeolithic stage we see nodules mottled black or with dust-coloured patina. The problem with these finds is that they occur in work sites at the top of the plateau without any stratigraphic arrangement. Scholars have tried to sort them into different groups based on the tool-types and give them a chronological order from Lower Palaeolithic onward. However, there is no guarantee that this arrangement is foolproof, particularly as the assemblages that one finds on the plateau top are full of tools which occur generally in Upper Palaeolithic horizons. It is possible that the stone tool industry concerned is a mixed industry, and if so, it has to be dated by its latest types. The point is that the latest types are all Upper Palaeolithic and thus one has to admit that, although Sindh so far is not known to possess any indisputably Lower Palaeolithic industry, it is very rich in Upper Palaeolithic finds.



3
Miniature jar, Kot Diji. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 1929.

The artefacts of the next lithic stage, i.e. microliths, occur mostly in the Thar desert section of eastern Sindh, being apparently concentrated around some lakes of the area. However, microlithic tools are also found in abundance near Karachi where the Mulri hills site has yielded a radiocarbon date in the 5th–4th millennium BCE.[2] Except for stone tools, no other evidence of occupation has been found in the lithic contexts of Sindh.

It is not yet clear if there is any correlation between such microlithic industries and the somewhat later prehistoric agricultural communities such as those represented by the Amri culture which was discovered in the 1930s by N.G. Majumdar. The date of the Amri culture is around the middle of the 4th millennium BCE. The basic focus of this culture is the Kohistan area in the southwest part of Sindh province, which has wide valleys and natural springs from where water was carried to the agricultural fields. One of its important recently excavated sites is Ghazi Shah which, apart from "Amri" pottery (a handmade red/beige pottery with geometrical designs painted with a thick brush in black, often with red fillings), yielded potters' graffiti, and beads of copper, lapis lazuli, and shell. An artificially built conical hill, which rises up to 25 metres above the level of the surrounding plain and possesses encircling terraced walls on the slopes, and foundations of domestic buildings below, is a distinct architectural type of these Kohistan settlements, suggesting a division of the settlement into an "acropolis" and a residential area as early as the mid-4th millennium BCE. The site of Amri was found to possess the "Amri culture" below the remains of the Indus civilization with the further advantage of having an "overlap" phase between the two. This site also exhibited the remains of two successive post-Indus occupations named "Jhukar" and "Jhangar". From this point of view Amri is a very significant site in the Sindh plain.[3]

The manifestation of a contemporary but geographically largely separate phase of occupation in the province is best seen at Kot Diji which lies at the top of a hilly outlier of the Sindh plain. The Amri culture sites have a distinct distribution in the Kirthar and Kohistan regions whereas the basic distribution area of the Kot Diji phase lies in the Cholistan area of Bahawalpur, to the east-northeast of Sindh. There are 21 occupational layers at Kot Diji, out of which the upper four (up to layer 3A) belong to the Indus civilization. The fifth

layer shows a burnt deposit, and all the 16 layers below it show "Kot Diji culture" (figure 3). The settlement here was divided into two sections: a fortified "citadel", and the general occupational area outside. The wall surrounding the citadel was made of mud and stood on a base of undressed stone blocks. On the outer side, this was supported in places by a mud-brick revetment and strengthened by bastions. The bastion at the northeastern corner measures 9.75 x 6.09 m. The houses inside the citadel were flat-roofed and had floors paved with mud-brick. In its earlier phase, the Kot Diji pottery was of thin texture and its main form was a squat globular vessel bearing paintings at the neck. In the later stage the painted decorations include fish-scales, pipal leaves, etc. (figure 4) and the shapes become more diverse and comprise dish-on-stands and globular vases. A typical painted motif is that of a horned deity. Copper must have been known at the site, although it is not explicitly reported by the excavator. The stone tools include blades, scrapers, micro-blades, leaf-shaped arrowheads, etc. Terracotta objects like toys, plain and painted bangles, cakes, cones, and beads have been found. There is a finely modelled terracotta bull with a well-developed body, stout muzzle, and short pointed horns. The minor antiquities are limited to stone beads and objects of bone and shell. The importance of the Kot Diji occupation lies in the fact that it is an

4

Painted potsherds, Kot Diji. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. nos. (*clockwise from top left*) 1942, 1938, 1947, 1937, 1946, 1945.

5
Ram, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 230.

immediate antecedent of the mature form of the Indus or Harappan civilization and has in fact been justifiably identified as Early Harappan.[4]

The nature of the Mature Harappan phase is best exemplified in Sindh at Mohenjodaro, located in the Larkana area. The site, although now some kilometres away from the river, seems to have been located originally on the bank of the Indus. It is currently assumed that the Indus delta and the coastline were then possibly as far north as the area below Hyderabad in southern Sindh. The area to the north of Hyderabad was very fertile in the 19th century; Larkana in particular was considered exceptionally fertile, producing three crops a year including wheat and rice. Apart from this factor of agricultural prosperity, the area of Mohenjodaro had the advantage of smooth access to the Kachi plain and the Bolan pass to the northwest. The trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia was conducted through these areas. Two major factors have been considered in recent years as characterizing the transition from Early Harappan to Mature Harappan: the introduction of canal-based irrigation, and the intensification of craft activities (figures 5–10).[5]

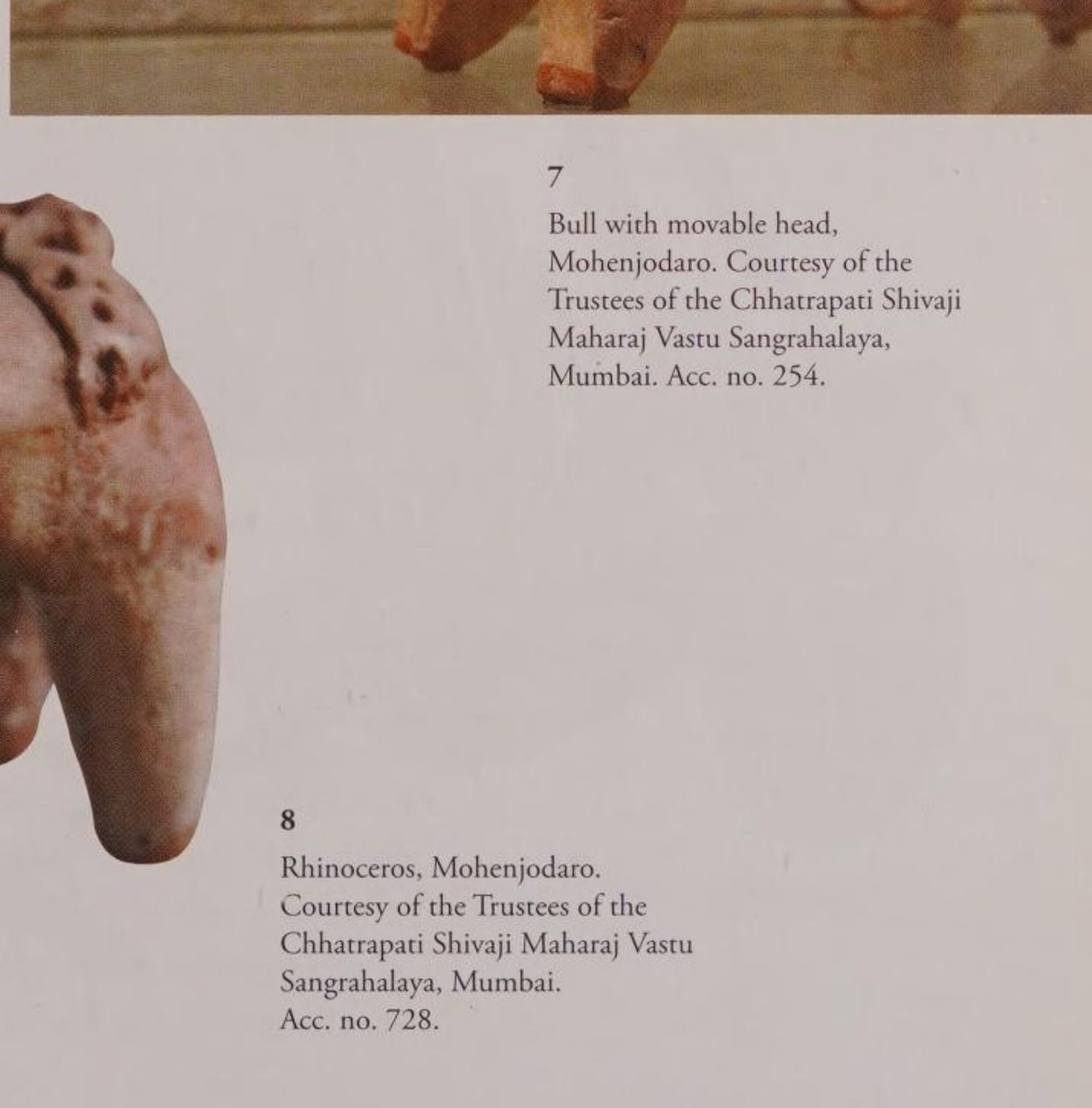
Excavations at Mohenjodaro were conducted in 1922–31, the results of which have been fully published.[6] The site was also briefly excavated in 1950 and 1964–65.[7] The rising level of ground water and the resultant accumulation of salt due to capillary action on the surface have led to extensive disintegration of the burnt brick houses at the site, and one does not know how long the excavated remains of Mohenjodaro will survive.

The two distinct mounds at Mohenjodaro – the smaller western mound (about 400 x 200 m) and the larger eastern one (roughly 820 x 720 m) – are separated by a 200-metre-wide low and open space. There are also traces of occupation which seem to date from the late phase of the city for about 2 kilometres to the east of the site. The overall area of the ancient occupation of Mohenjodaro is now considered about 200 hectares. Because of the presence of subsoil water, the earliest level of occupation of Mohenjodaro could not be reached by archaeologists who generally accept the idea of three main levels of occupation at the site: Early, Intermediate, and Late, each divided into three sub-phases. The earliest excavated level is Early III, which means that according to archaeological calculations the levels of Early I and II occupation are still unexcavated.

The western mound has yielded some characteristic buildings of the Indus civilization. The whole complex is built on the top of a 7-metre-high platform which was encased by a 6-metre-thick mud-brick retaining wall, raised to create a fortification wall around the western mound. The fortification wall was further strengthened by bastions, gateways, and stairs from the platform to the original ground level. A Buddhist stupa of the early centuries CE

6

Hen, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 251.



7

Bull with movable head, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 254.

8

Rhinoceros, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 728.

9

Seal, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 2051.

dominates the northeastern corner of the western mound, and it has been assumed that the ancient temple, if any, at the site should be found below this stupa. This is based on the idea that there is continuity in the sacred spots at sites, and thus, if the Buddhists found the northeastern corner of the western mound sacred, their Bronze Age predecessors might have viewed this corner in the same way. In any case, the stupa has not yet been dismantled, and we do not know what lies below it.

On the basis of a similar argument, a large multi-roomed structure with thick outer walls across a north–south street to the west of the stupa is called the "Collegiate Building" in the archaeological literature. It was probably the residence of high officials or priests. This building has to its west-southwest the Great Bath which is basically a rectangular 2.43-metre-deep pool in the middle of a paved courtyard with open galleries and rooms. Steps of brick covered by wood set with bitumen or asphalt go down from the level of the courtyard to the pool at its north and south sides. The northern staircase has a small platform at the base and a small further step. An outlet at the northeastern corner of the pool leads to a corbelled drain which discharges down the western slope of the mound. There is a well in one of the rooms around the courtyard, and it is possible that water was drawn from this well to fill the pool. The bricks used for the construction of the pool are set on edge and bonded with gypsum. The pool as a whole was made watertight by applying bitumen to its outer wall which itself possessed a surrounding wall. There was a gap between the two, and this gap was found filled with rammed mud.

It has been pointed out that the Great Bath was the only free-standing structure which could be walked around at Mohenjodaro (see figure 1). On the model of the latter-day Hindu temple which invariably possesses a tank by its side, the Great Bath of Mohenjodaro has been supposed to represent a sacred tank.

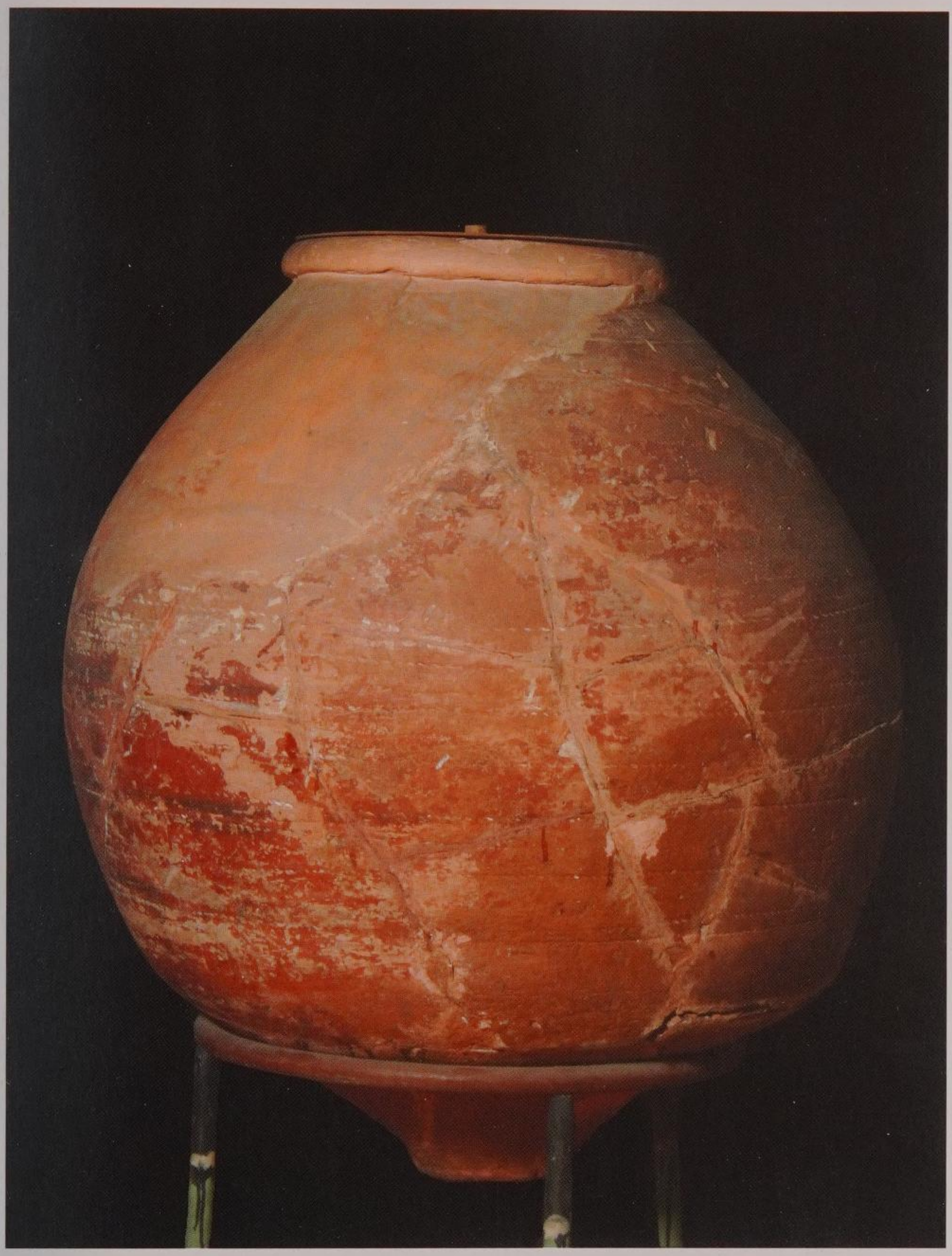
To the southwest of the Bath lies a structure which has been interpreted as a granary. This identification is not beyond dispute. Further south are the remains of a pillared hall where 20 rectangular brick piers divide the space into five east–west corridors which possibly had an arrangement of raised benches.

These are the major "public" buildings of the western mound of Mohenjodaro which, because of the concentration of such buildings here and also because of its high and fortified character, has been interpreted as the citadel area of the ancient city.

The eastern mound of Mohenjodaro also lay within a surrounding wall and its individual houses were constructed on top of mud platforms. Three north–south streets at about 180-metre intervals divide the area into four habitational sectors. One of these streets has been called First Street and it is 9.14–10.66 metres wide. The brick-built drains on either side are generally 23 cm deep and 45–60 cm wide, and covered by brick slabs. Evidence exists of two brick-built enclosures by the side of this road. These were possibly used for dumping garbage

10

Toy cart, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 1605.



11

Storage jar, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 1637.

which was apparently cleared on a regular basis. The drains were regularly cleaned too. The entrance to individual houses was usually from the side-lanes. Only rarely have rooms fronting main roads been found, and these are interpreted as shops. One particular complex of houses is shoddy and regimented enough to be identified as the "coolie lines", i.e. the living quarters of manual labourers. The average arrangement of rooms in a house was around one or more courtyards which were open to the sky.

No indisputable evidence of a temple has been found in the eastern sector of Mohenjodaro, although there are various speculations in this regard. A distinct feature of the site is the number of brick-built shafts of wells with pavings around them. Experts think that the level of water management in Mohenjodaro was very high in comparison

12

Saddle quern, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. nos. 101, 102.

13

Potsherds, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. nos. *(l–r)* 202, 200, 846.

with contemporary civilizations elsewhere. The existence of privies and bathing places in some houses, with terracotta pipes and drains carrying off the soakage, is a remarkable feature of the period. The city was also well-administered. It is only towards the end of its time that its houses became crowded and shoddy, with a deteriorating standard of road maintenance. Radiocarbon dates suggest that this process began around 2200 BCE. We do not know when the first occupation here began, but a date early in the 3rd millennium BCE should be acceptable.

Mohenjodaro has yielded a large number of Indus civilization antiquities such as seals (figure 9), copper implements, gold and silver beads, plain and painted pottery (figures 11 and 13), stone statuary, and so on (figures 12 and 14). The excavations at this site have provided a picture of the Indus civilization in Sindh, complemented by excavations at Chanhudaro and many lesser sites.[8] As far as the present evidence goes, Mohenjodaro was perhaps the richest site of the Indus civilization as a whole, and its importance was possibly based on its extensive external and internal trade contacts. The city's decline could have been caused by several factors, the most prominent of which was possibly a significant change in the course of the Indus. There is no reason to believe that the city fell prey to an invasion.

There is no consistent cultural picture of prehistoric Sindh after the Indus civilization typified by Mohenjodaro ended. Current opinion holds that the civilization did not die but transformed itself. Evidence of this transformation is first found in what has been called "Jhukar culture" which, although having some Indus-type black-on-red pottery, was characterized by a type of pot with incised strokes at the shoulder.

Thus, as we said at the start, though Mohenjodaro dominates the archaeology of prehistoric Sindh, there is wider archaeological evidence that places the site in its context.

14
Maze, Mohenjodaro. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Acc. no. 140.

NOTES

1 P. Biagi and M. Cremaschi, "The early Palaeolithic sites of the Rohri hills (Sind, Pakistan) and their environmental significance", *World Archaeology* 19(3), 1988, pp. 42–433; P. Biagi, M. Kazi, and F. Negrino, "An Acheulian workshop at Ziarat Pir Shaban on the Rohri hills", *South Asian Studies* 12, 1996, pp. 49–62; P. Biagi, "Ongar revisited", *Sindhological Studies* 21(1–2), 2005, pp. 1–21.

2 P. Biagi, "The Mesolithic settlement of Sindh (Pakistan): a preliminary assessment", *Praehistoria* 4–5, 2003–04, pp. 195–220.

3 N.G. Majumdar, *Explorations in Sind*, Delhi, 1934; J.-M. Casal, "Fresh digging at Amri", *Pakistan Archaeology* 1, 1964, pp. 57–65.

4 F.A. Khan, "Excavations at Kot Diji", *Pakistan Archaeology* 2, 1965, pp. 13–85.

5 For the transition to Mature Harappan and the nature of this transition and possible factors, see D.K. Chakrabarti, *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology*, Delhi, 2006, pp. 140–44.

6 J. Marshall, ed., *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, 3 vols., London, 1931; E. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, 2 vols., Delhi, 1938.

7 R.E.M. Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, Cambridge, 1953; G.F. Dales, "New investigations at Mohenjodaro", *Archaeology* 18, pp. 145–50.

8 E. Mackay, *Chanhudaro Excavations 1935–36*, New Haven, 1943.

1

Rupee in the name of Mahmud Shah Durrani, struck at Bhakkar by the British forces.

Coinages at the Crossroads: The Monetary Heritage of Sindh

Shailendra Bhandare

2

Silver rupee of Sher Shah Suri, struck at Bhakkar. The mint name reads: *Shergarh urf Bakkar*.

Sindh represents a unique geopolitical entity in the history of the Indian subcontinent. Drained by the Indus, its fertile plains stretch between the mountain ranges of Baluchistan to the west and the Tharparkar desert on the east. Across the passes through Baluchistan, Sindh links with Iran, but on the eastern side the desert cuts it off from the larger mass of India barring a few caravan routes. The Indus delta makes up for this – maritime networks have ensured Sindh's links not only with Kutch and Gujarat lying immediately to its south, but also across the Arabian Sea, to the eastern coast of the Arabian peninsula and to the Persian Gulf. The Indus, as it flows from north to south, has acted as a trade artery for Sindh, connecting it with the Punjab and, beyond it, to the region of Gandhara. These connections have had an immense impact on the history of Sindh, making it a region located on cultural crossroads in historic times. I would regard coinage as a direct outcome of historical developments, closely associated with the geopolitical connectivity of Sindh as has been just described. Bearing this in mind, I will proceed to present an account of coinage in Sindh in a chronological manner. It may be noted that this account is not entirely based on published or unpublished "archaeological" finds strictly within Sindh; some coins discussed here may originate in neighbouring regions but have a wider implication as part of the monetary picture one could associate with Sindh.

The earliest Indian coins, dated to c. 450–200 BCE, are often termed "punch-marked" coins and exhibit taxonomic characters that allow their classification into two broad categories – the earlier localized or "Archaic" series, believed to have been struck by various *mahajanapada*s (great nations) and the later "Universal" or "Imperial" series that is widely regarded to have been the monetary apparatus of the Maurya empire. The region of Sindh is labelled "Sindhu-Sauvira" as one of the *mahajanapada*s of Classical Indian tradition, however no coins that can be attributed to a unique "pre-Maurya" or "Archaic" character have been found from Sindh. With the advent of Indo-Greeks in the 3rd century BCE, Sindh passed through a phase of "Gandharan" domination, and as the Greek rule fragmented it came under the sway of Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian rulers. It is in this period, c. 150–100 BCE, that we encounter the first coins characteristically associated with Sindh, in terms of numismatic aspects like metal, weight, fabric, and design. Termed as "Sind"-type drachms by various numismatists, these coins were struck by Indo-Parthian rulers like Gondophares, Abdagases, Sases, Satavastres, and Sorpedones (figure 3). Each bears a profile portrait of the ruler on the obverse, and an inscription in Kharoshthi script naming him surrounding the motif of a Hellenic goddess on the reverse. Early issues like those of Gondophares exhibit a distinct "Iranian"-ness in the profile of the ruler. The first Kushan ruler Kujula Kadphises also struck silver coins in the "Sind" type. The fact that they were reported from Taxila excavations establishes the links Sindh had in the 1st century CE with regions located to its far north. "Sind" coins of Sases are found struck upon coins of Nahapana, the Kshaharata Kshatrapa ruler of Gujarat, and they have thus provided an important marker for historical chronology of these regions.

3
"Sind"-type silver drachms of Indo-Parthian ruler Satavastres, c. early 1st century CE.

Kushan coins of succeeding kings like Kanishka have been reported from Sindh. But it is a series of indigenous rulers, reportedly from Baluchistan, that is our next interest insofar as coin circulation in Sindh goes. These rulers are known as "Parata Rajas" from the title seen in the inscriptions their coins bear. They were almost unknown till recently, but within the last decade large hoards and several stray finds have appeared in the trade, steadily enabling us to know more and build a cohesive historical narrative of this largely unknown dynasty. The Parata Raja coinage is essentially bimetallic, comprising silver coins in varying degrees of purity and copper coins. The legends are either in Brahmi or in Kharoshthi. Given the location of the Parata Raja domains between southern Afghanistan (Kandahar) and Sindh, such a dichotomy is to be expected, as these were the respective zones of Kharoshthi and Brahmi prevalence. The coins have

distinct affiliation in terms of design with the Western Kshatrapa issues of Gujarat – all have on the reverse a bold svastika, which is surrounded by a legend that includes the name of the issuing ruler along with a patronymic. Brahmi is chiefly seen on the silver issues, while the copper and very low-grade silver issues have Kharoshthi inscriptions. The obverse generally depicts a profile bust of the ruler adorned with a diadem or tiara-like headgear but on certain copper coins a full standing effigy of the king is seen. Here the king is shown in Iranian-style attire comprising loose trousers, a tunic with distinct sash and folds emerging from the back, and headgear. Various rulers like Miramara, Yolamara, Spajhana, Hriramira, et al. are known from their coins, and research into the internal chronology of the dynasty is still ongoing (figure 4). These names ostensibly do not have an "Indian" ring to them but a king named "Bhimarjuna" is known, which clearly has an allusion to Bhima and Arjuna, two characters from the epic *Mahabharata*, and the language of the inscriptions is evidently the same version of "Hybridized Sanskrit" in which inscriptions of the Western Kshatrapa coins are written. All these features collectively make the Parata Raja issues a distinct coinage from the Indo-Iranian "borderlands". The coinage thus fits in very well with the geopolitical uniqueness of Sindh and its adjoining areas. Chronologically, the coinage has been dated to the immediate post-Kushan epoch in the region, corresponding to c. 150–300 CE.

The Iranian connection evident from Parata Raja coins is further accentuated from the 4th–5th century onwards, when Sindh became a part of the Sassanian empire. It is well known that the Sassanians were followers of Zoroastrianism and as such their coins showed a fire-altar flanked by attendants on the reverse. Although most coins depict the fire as a cluster of flames emanating from the top of the altar, a few coins show an anthropomorphic representation where a bearded bust is seen instead of the flames. The obverse depicted a profile portrait of the emperor in full regalia, consisting of an elaborate crown, the shape and form of which was specific to kings. A Pahlavi inscription often surrounded the portrait. A distinct series of gold coins, having most of the characters just described, is known from Sindh and the adjoining Kutch-Gujarat regions. It cannot be concluded whether the coins were struck under direct Sassanian authority or whether they were issues of local rulers merely imitating the Sassanian coin type. The series is conspicuous by the presence of certain unique design elements. The execution of the king's portrait and the altar is markedly different than in most other Sassanian issues; in many cases, symbols are added to the field immediately in front of the face of the portrait. The symbols, occurring one at a time, are quite specifically Vaishnavite in bearing – the "wheel" of Vishnu, the "lotus", and the character "Shri" in typical Brahmi of the 5th–6th century, have been noted (figure 5). These coins show a progressive debasement in gold content and towards the end of the series we have varieties with a Brahmi inscription on the reverse as well. It is placed on either side of the fire altar and in many cases has been read as *Ranaditya Satya*. Literally it means the "Truth of the Sun in War"; however, in the context of the coinage, the "aditya" ending of the first word may be taken as a reference to the Sun temple at Multan. It is well known that Multan had emerged as an important centre of Sun worship in the centuries before the Islamic occupation of the region and indeed the early Islamic rulers of Sindh had kept the temple in continual worship till it was destroyed in the 11th century by the invading armies of Mahmud Ghaznavi.

The history of Sindh between the period of Sassanian domination and the Arab conquest is largely a mystery. From literary sources we know that a Brahmanical

4
Silver drachm of Spajhana, Parata Raja ruler in Baluchistan-Sindh, c. 2nd century CE.

5
Gold dinars of Sassanian type from Sindh, c. 6th–7th century.

ruling family, often labelled as orthodox and rapacious, had established itself in Sindh in the late 7th–early 8th centuries. Its capital was the port of Debal situated at the mouth of the Indus. Dahir, a member of this family, was defeated in 711 CE at the battle of Alor by Muhammad ibn Qasim, the commander of the armies of Hajjaj, the Arab governor of eastern Iran, which was brought under Islamic control in the late 7th century. Ibn Qasim's victory is often noted as a "turning point" in subcontinental history, marking the epoch of Islam's political arrival in India. However, coins present an entirely different story.

Soon after the fall of Debal, ibn Qasim struck coins, known as "dirhams", belonging to the "Umayyad" type, which was introduced by the Arab caliph Abd al-Rahman when he reformed the currency of the Arab empire on Islamic standards. Coins of this type were devoid of any pictorial representation, had Quranic verses glorifying the theocracy and marginal inscriptions which gave the mint and date after pronouncing that the coin had been struck in the name of Allah. The mint name on the earliest Islamic issues from Sindh has been noted as "Al-Daybul", which was ostensibly the Arabic version of Debal (see Currim, figure 5).

The history of early Islamic rulers in Sindh is divided into two phases – the early phase, mid-8th to early 9th century, constitutes the rule of Arab governors, appointed as they were directly by the caliph. A later phase saw two lineages emerging in charge of Sindh, which was split under northern and southern divisions by the early 9th century. Collectively these rulers are referred to as the "Amirs of Sindh".

The Arab governors ruled from the new city of al-Mansurah, located near the old capital Debal, and although a complete chronology of office-holders is far from being established, coins struck by a few have helped corroborate their existence from textual sources and some have indeed added new names to the repertoire. Known coins of the Arab governors are of copper and conform largely to the conservative Umayyad design; however, they incorporate certain design features like eight- or six-pointed stars (seen on the coins of Hisham ibn Amru) (see Currim, figure 6). But it is the coins of the Amirs of Sindh that have opened a fascinating chapter in the history of Islamic numismatics, owing largely to discoveries in recent times. Before we proceed on to them, it would be appropriate to give some background information about contemporary currencies and the political setting of northern India.

The northern part of the Indian subcontinent was largely under the control of two dynasties that emerged powerful in the 8th–9th centuries CE. In the north, the Gurjara-Pratiharas dominated; in the Deccan, the Rashtrakutas were supreme. Both houses fostered systems of governance that have been called "feudal" and comprised several hierarchical levels under an imperial sovereign, each characterized by a subordinate ruler to whom belonged a land tenure which brought certain royal prerogatives with it. The Pratiharas were responsible for the launch of a lightweight silver currency, consisting of "drammas", each of which weighed around 0.7–0.8 gram. These drammas had a typical design: on the obverse was a stylized profile portrait, and on the reverse one could see three bold dots surrounded by truncated inscriptions

6
Silver dramma of the Pratihara dynasty with the "three dots" design.

which prima facie made no sense (figure 6). The origins of this design could be traced to the coins of Skanda Gupta, the last of the imperial Guptas, but the standard to which they were struck is entirely a Pratihara invention. How a currency based on a small denominational standard functioned and how it fits into a pan-Asian monetary phenomenon substantiated by old and new trade networks, are aspects upon which research is ongoing. From the distribution of finds of these coins, it is evident that the dramma currency spanned most of northern India. Available data suggests that the Rashtrakutas, too, struck coins to the dramma standard but their designs broadly differ from the Pratihara issues.

The interaction between the Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas on one hand and the Arab rulers in Sindh on the other has been mentioned in many Arab chronicles of the 9th–11th centuries. The Rashtrakutas, who controlled important entrepot towns on the western coast, were disposed in a friendly way towards the Arabs. The chroniclers call them "Balhara" kings and mention their enmity to the Pratiharas. As friends of the "Balharas", the Arabs in Sindh were also political enemies of the Pratiharas. At least two Arab advances into Gujarat and further east were actively stalled by Nagabhatta, the Pratihara ruler. However, such a belligerent political intercourse does not seem to have stopped the influence of Pratihara "dramma" currency on the coins struck by the Amirs of Sindh – in fact for the first time in the monetary history of Sindh, a numismatic tradition coming in from the east rather than the Iranian west is seen to have contributed to what is indeed a remarkably syncretistic coinage. As with other coinages hitherto discussed, our knowledge of these coins is pretty much a recent phenomenon and as such their study continues to be "work in progress". But from what we know so far, it seems certain that the coinage is unlike any other struck

7
Silver dramma with the "three dots" design struck by Arab Amirs of Sindh. Just below the three dots, the Kufic inscription *L'illah* can be seen.

by Islamic rulers anywhere in the world in terms of design, inscriptions, and historical bearing. The series struck by the Amirs of northern Sindh, ruling from Multan, seems to be earlier than the other, which was struck by the Habbarid Amirs of Mansurah in the south. The earliest of these look exactly like the Pratihara drammas, except they have a small Kufic inscription *L'illah* (Arabic "To Allah") inscribed just below the three bold dots on the reverse (figure 7). The location of this inscription subsequently becomes the place where citations to several Amirs by their names occur; many of these names are indeed welcome additions to our historical knowledge about early Arab rule in Sindh. These names are always preceded by the words *L'illah* and thereby allude to a religious legitimization conforming to the principles of Islamic theocracy.

The orthodoxy, however, ends at that – it is the obverse of these coins that offers the most intriguing detail the coinage has to offer. It bears inscriptions in Nagari script that allude to the Vaishnavite pantheon, with names of the Varaha (boar) incarnation of Vishnu such as *Shri Adivaraha*, *Shri Matvaraha*, and *Shri Dharanivaraha* (figure 8). It is to be noted that *Shri Adivaraha* was a Pratihara title, first employed by Bhoja I, an important ruler of that dynasty. As such its occurrence on the Arab issues from Sindh may suggest a subservience of the Amirs to the Pratiharas. But as the other titles do not have such dynastic bearing and the fact that names of other divinities like Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, also appear on these coins, it seems that the names possibly allude to a divine legitimization of the Emirate through their mention in this manner. This

8
Silver dramma of Munabi, Arab Amir of Multan invoking the boar incarnation of Vishnu, as seen from the Nagari inscription *Shri Adivaraha* on the obverse.

9a and b
Silver drammas of an Arab Amir of Multan (name unread as yet), invoking the Sun god as *Shri Jayanta Raja* (a) and *Shri Mihira Deva* (b).

is further accentuated by the fact that the name of the Prophet also appears in the same league, remarkably so in its Sanskrit version *Shri Madhumati*! Coins with the legends *Jayanta Raja* and *Mihira Deva*, both ostensibly referring to the Sun god at Multan, are also known (figures 9a and b). Such bilingualism and the references to brahmanical divinities make these coins important adjuncts for study of the early Islamic expansion in India and indeed force us to rethink the models and inferences that have been drawn for it in the past century of historical research.

A later series of these coins substitute the Nagari legends with an Arabic inscription that reads *Allah Wali* [followed by the name of the issuer] *Fi Nasarahu* meaning "Allah is the Lord of [the issuer and he] leads him to victory". Most common among these are struck by an Amir named Muhammad, whose name appears on the reverse under the three dots as *L'illah Muhammad*. They are soon followed by drammas citing Fatimid caliphs al-Mu'izz and al-Aziz.

Coins of the Amirs of southern Sindh conform to a lighter "dramma" standard, c. 0.5–0.7 grams, and are often referred to as "Qanhari" dirhams by Arab chroniclers. They also testify that coins named "gadhaiya paisa" also circulated alongside the Qanhari dirhams; these belonged to the pan-north-Indian coinage often called "Indo-Sassanian" by numismatists, judging by the fact that the design it employed was derived from the Sassanian "profile portrait and fire-altar with attendants" type, although it is often degraded beyond recognition into a myriad of dots and lines. The Qanhari dirhams of Mansurah give us a wide range of names like Muhammad, Ahmed, Abd Allah, Abd al-Rahman, Daud, Issa, Ali, and Umar as their issuers, some of which find corroboration in Arab accounts. They have inscriptions voicing similar sentiments to those of the monolingual drammas of the northern series. Apart from the *Allah Wali…* inscription described above, they bear two more variations: *B'illah Yathiq* [followed by the name of the issuer] *wa bihi Yantasir* meaning "In god trusts [the issuer] and through Him he is victorious" and *B'illah Thiqqa* [followed by the name of the issuer] *Fi Nasarahu*, meaning "In God is the trust of [the issuer and he] leads him to victory". An adjunct *L'illah Muhammad Rasool Allah*, meaning "To Allah, Muhammad is the prophet of Allah", follows all the variations. Some coins of Abd Allah also have the orthodox version of the Islamic profession of faith, the *Shahada*, as *La Ilah ill'Allah Wahadahu La Shariq Lahu Muhammad Rasool Allah*. Evidently, coins with the *Allah Wali…* legend link with the northern series in terms of inscriptional details. From some inscriptional details, we also know about a political hierarchy operating amongst the Amirs. For example, inscriptions of certain coins mentioning Umar also mention Yahya and Hatim, who seem to cite Umar as an overlord.

Alongside the silver drammas, the Amirs of Sindh struck a profuse copper coinage. They often have jumbled inscriptions, and the variation in weight encountered amongst the copper coins is very high. No firm metrological conclusion may be drawn as such, but stylistically the coins have certain common features. Most have a four-petal flower in the centre of the obverse and the reverse inscription may often be enclosed in a four-arched cartouche (figure 10).

The adoption of the "dramma" currency

10
Copper coins of the Arab Amirs of Sindh.

by the Amirs of Sindh conceivably had an impact on coinages across the Indian Ocean as Sindh under Arab rule served as a significant node in maritime trade of the early medieval period (9th–12th centuries), through ports located on the mouths of the Indus. Coins very similar to the Sindh drammas were struck by the Kharijite rulers of contemporary Oman. East African sultanates, striking coins as late as the 12th–13th centuries, continue to resonate the *Allah Wali…* legend. Presumably the influence came from Sindh coins as such legends are entirely unknown from any other Islamic coin series. Another remarkable find consists of Abbasid and Umayyad dirhams cut to dramma size and weights to circulate in Sindh. This proves that despite the large numbers of drammas of both northern and southern series being available, exigent currency demands often employed such ready measures from coins that were imported through trade, rather than melting and re-fabricating them. From extant inscriptions seen on these pieces, names of mints located in Wasit, Kufa, Merv, and Fustat (ancient Cairo) could be gathered and serve as an indirect indicator of Sindh's trade links with other regions in the caliphate.

Mahmud Ghaznavi conquered Sindh towards the end of his reign, in 1030 – first by overthrowing the "heretic" Fatimid dynasty of Amirs at Multan and then continuing south to lower Sindh and capturing Mansurah. The "Qanhari" dirhams continued to be the chief currency of Sindh even in the rule of successive political authority, under the Ghaznavids. Unlike the issues of the Amirs, these conform to a more conservative style, with the orthodox version of the *Shahada* given a prominent place, often spread on both sides inscribed in long horizontal Kufic characters. The name of the issuing king is placed at the end of this religious inscription. Apart from Mahmud, Qanhari dirhams were struck in the name of his successors like Mas'ud I, Maudud, Farrukhzad, and Ibrahim. As a currency, the Qanhari dirhams tend to die out in the 12th century. Towards the end of the 12th century, the Ghurid sultan Muhammad bin Sam conquered Ghaznavid domains and also established Muslim rule in Delhi and the Indian interior by subduing several rulers in Punjab and the Doab (Yamuno-Gangetic plains).

The next phase of independent coinage in Sindh is marked by the rule of Nasir al-Din Qubacha, the governor of Uchh, who was matrimonially related to the successor of Muhammad bin Sam at Delhi, the "slave" ruler Qutb al-Din Aibak. Qubacha established himself in Multan in the aftermath of Aibak's death in 1210, occupied the flood-plains of the Indus as far south as the river's mouth, and challenged the authority of Shams al-Din Iltutmish, the successor of Aibak, as far north as Lahore. If Qanhari dirhams could be regarded as the mainstay of currency under the Amirs, billon coins known as "jitals" depicting a "bull-and-horseman" design were so for the later Ghaznavids, Ghurids, and sultans of the "slave" house at Delhi. These were derived from an exceedingly popular coin type first struck by rulers of the Hindu "Shahi" dynasty of Greater Gandhara. The bulk of Qubacha's coins struck in Sindh belong to this genre. They all bear a stylized recumbent bull on the obverse and an equally stylized horseman on the reverse. A Nagari inscription *Shri Kubacha Suritan* appears above the bull. But in some varieties,

11
Billon jital of Nasir al-Din Qubacha, independent sultan in Sindh.

the bull motif is omitted and substituted by an Arabic inscription that gives Qubacha's full name along with the title "Sultan" (figure 11). The horseman side often bears a Nagari legend *Shri Hamira*, the Sanskritized version of "Emir", which reflects his status as the ruler.

Iltutmish ultimately brought Qubacha to heel in 1228 when he attacked Qubacha's base Uchh and followed him along the Indus as he fled to his defeat. Qubacha managed to entrench himself at Bhakkar, an island-fortress on the Indus near Sukkur in Sindh, but drowned in the river as he attempted to cross it. With Qubacha's defeat Sindh was brought under the control of the Sultans of Delhi. Iltutmish continued striking jitals similar to those of Qubacha but with his own name and titles, and also issued a silver "tankah" standard coinage from Sindh. Sindh remained under his control, but not for long. In 1230, an adventurer named Saif al-Din Hasan Qarlugh appeared in Sindh. He was an officer serving with Jalal al-Din Mangubarni, the crown prince of Khwarizm (Khiwa in modern Uzbekistan), who had taken refuge in India following a Mongol invasion. After a brief spell in Lahore, Hasan Qarlugh continued his flight into Iran via Afghanistan, but he managed to linger on at Ghazna, the former Ghurid capital. While Iltutmish was alive, he did not dare against the might of Delhi, but after the sultan's death dissensions in the Delhi court gave Qarlugh a chance to establish himself in Sindh and attempt a capture of Multan. He accomplished both but did not enjoy the latter for long. He then secured his domain in Sindh and continued to rule there till his death in 1240. His son Muhammad Qarlugh succeeded him, and continued till 1259.

12
Silver tankah of Iltutmish, Sultan of Delhi, struck in characteristic "Sind" type.

13
Silver tankah of Hasan Qarlugh – note the resemblance with the tankah of Iltutmish.

Hasan Qarlugh issued jitals in pictorial and non-pictorial types from mints in Sindh whose locations remain unknown, as the coins do not give a mint name. He also struck a series of silver tankahs that show marked similarity with the variety struck by Iltutmish (figures 12 and 13). These cite Abbasid caliphs like al-Zahir and al-Mustansir as theocratic overlords. Muhammad Qarlugh's known coinage is as yet confined to jitals but he introduced a variety markedly different from others – it shows a horse surrounded by Muhammad's *laqab* or descriptive name, *Nasir al-Dunya wa al-Din* on the obverse, while the reverse gives his name in Sharada script as *Shri Mahamada Karalugha* (figure 14).

In the first half of the 14th century, a Rajput tribe named Samma had established itself in Lower Sindh. Although the Sammas had converted to Islam, their rulers often retained Hindu names and ruled with the title of "Jam". Their capital was at Thatta at the mouth of the Indus. Early rulers of the dynasty paid tribute to Muhammad bin Tughlaq the sultan of Delhi, but a political intrigue resulted in Muhammad launching an unsuccessful campaign against them. In 1362, Muhammad's son Firuz Tughlaq invaded Sindh and launched a great offensive on Thatta. Jam Timaji put up a stiff resistance but another expedition launched a couple of years later saw him capitulate to Firuz Tughlaq. Sometimes during these expeditions, Firuz struck a series of billon coins where the name "Sind" appears for the first time in a numismatic context, as the mint name *Sahat-i-Sind* (figure 15). Hence the importance of these rare issues, but by and large the period of the Jams marks the

14 *left*

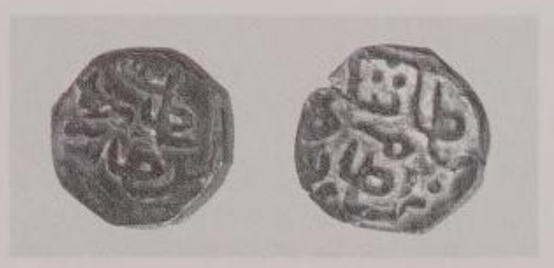
Copper jital of Muhammad Qarlugh with his name inscribed in Sharada script on the reverse.

15

Coin of Firuz Tughlaq with the mint name *Sahat-i-Sind*.

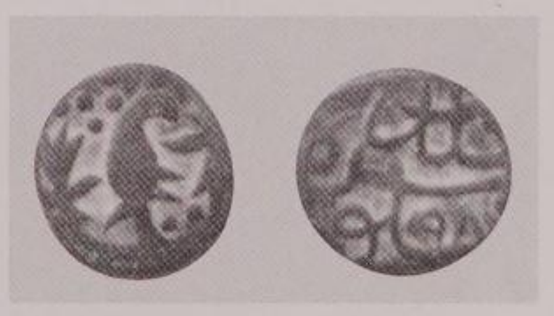
16

Copper coin of Jam Nizam al-Din.



17

Copper coin of Jam Firuz.



18

Copper coin of Mirza Muhammad Baqi Tarkhan struck at "Tattah".

beginning of scarcity of local coin types in Sindh. The Jams themselves struck coins only towards the end of the lineage, ostensibly because they functioned as the vassals of the Delhi Sultans till then. In 1439, Jam Nanda or Nizam al-Din (r. 1428–61) threw off this allegiance, taking advantage of the Mongol invasions and the resultant weakening of the Delhi Sultanate. Certain rare copper coins struck by him are known, as also are copper issues of his successor Jam Firuz, which are more numerous in comparison (figures 16 and 17). But the coinage of the Jams of Sindh may be termed sparse in a general sense.

The Arghuns were the next tribe to take over Sindh, Shah Beg Arghun ousting Jam Firuz in 1520. In 1556, however, Muhammad Isa Tarkhan, a member of an elder branch of the Arghun clan named the "Arghun-Tarkhans", ascended the throne following a succession dispute at the death of Shah Hussain Arghun, the son of Shah Beg Arghun. Mirza Muhammad Baqi Tarkhan, the son of Muhammad Isa Tarkhan who succeeded him in 1567, is known to have struck a series of copper coins. These were struck in Thatta, the capital of Lower Sindh and bear a pictorial "peacock" design on the obverse. The reverse bears the mint name *Baldat Tattah* and the date, thus facilitating the attribution of these otherwise anonymous coins to the Arghun-Tarkhans (figure 18).

Upper Sindh remained a part of the Delhi Sultanate and the island-fort of Bhakkar acted as the regional stronghold. A mint was opened at Bhakkar for the first time during the reign of Sher Shah Suri. He renamed Bhakkar "Shergarh" and accordingly his coins bear the mint name *Shergarh urf Bakkar* (figure 2). The Suri mint at Bhakkar produced silver coins struck to the new "rupee" standard introduced by Sher Shah, and as such the Suri issues of Bhakkar

19
Rupee of Akbar, Thatta mint.

22 *far right*
Rupee of Akbar, Multan mint.

mark the advent of the rupee in the region. Hereafter, the rupee continued to dominate the monetary history of Sindh.

The Mughals under Babar penetrated Upper Sindh early in the 16th century and the conquest was completed when Akbar (r. 1556–1605) defeated the last Arghun-Tarkhan ruler Mirza Jani Beg in 1585, and brought Thatta under his control. During Mughal rule, Sindh attained the sort of political and economic stability that had eluded the province for almost five centuries. As such, money production which had virtually ground to a halt during the Jam and Arghun-Tarkhan period accelerated, particularly in Lower Sindh. Akbar rejuvenated the mint at Thatta and it went on to become one of the most productive mints of the Mughal empire (figure 19). In addition to Thatta, mints were also opened at the port towns of Debal Bandar and Lahri Bandar (figures 20 and 21) at the mouth of the Indus but they do not seem to have functioned for long, judging by the rarity of their produce, the rupees. In Upper Sindh, the mint at Bhakkar continued the production of rupees in the beginning of Akbar's reign, and the Emperor established another mint at Multan (figure 22). Both these went through a period of obsolescence during the latter part of Akbar's reign and also during the reign of Jahangir (1605–27). The mint at Thatta copiously produced coins in this period, which probably satiated the currency demands of the province of Sindh (figure 23). But from the reign of Shah Jahan onwards (1627–58), the Mughal monetary apparatus received a welcome boost through the influx of New World silver, brought in through the agency of European mercantile companies, and as a direct outcome, money production in Sindh went through its maximization phase. Profuse coinage, in both silver and gold, was issued from the principal mints of Thatta, Bhakkar, and Multan. In marked contrast, the issue of copper coins was rather limited and confined to Bhakkar and Multan. Some coins of odd denominations, like the one-third mohur in the name of Muhammad Shah (1719–49), were struck conceivably for special occasions (figure 24). This particular coin is also important for two other reasons – first, "Sind" makes its appearance on it as the mint name once again after Firuz Tughlaq struck his "Sahat-i-Sind" coins in the 14th century; and second, Muhammad Shah is accorded a new title, *Amir Sahib al-Zaman*, which is not known from any other variety of his coins. The reference to the mint location as "Sind" obviously makes its identification problematic but as the mint at Bhakkar in Upper Sindh was active all along, one could

20
Rupee of Akbar, Debal Bandar mint.

21
Rupee of Akbar, Lahri Bandar mint.

23 *above left*
Heavy rupee of Jahangir, Thatta mint.

24 *above right*
One-third mohur of Muhammad Shah, "Sind" mint.

surmise that the place where coins with the mint name "Sind" were struck must have been located somewhere in Lower Sindh, Thatta being the most likely candidate.

After the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal empire rapidly fragmented under the pressure of dissensions from within and invasions from the outside. Sindh was no exception and a tribe named the Kalhoras established themselves in Thatta. The Kalhora chief maintained a nominal allegiance to the Mughal emperor. The Kalhoras brought about political consolidation in Sindh by bringing the upper and lower halves of the province under their sole authority. In 1738-40, northern India witnessed the whirlwind raid of Nadir Shah, the Afsharid ruler of Iran, who swooped down the Khyber to occupy Punjab and eventually defeated the Mughal armies at Karnal in 1739. As part of his tribute, the Mughal emperor awarded the provinces of Sindh and Punjab to Nadir Shah. After his return to Kabul in 1740, Nadir Shah asked Noor Muhammad Kalhora, the chief of Thatta, to visit him. Noor Muhammad locked himself up in the fort of Umarkot in defence but the fort was soon overrun by Nadir's armies. The chief sued for peace and after paying a large indemnity was confirmed as the governor of Sindh, which became part of Nadir's sprawling Persian empire. This brought the historical association of Sindh with Iran full circle after nearly one and a half millennia.

Nadir Shah continued to strike rupees from mints located in Sindh – they are known to bear the mint names Bhakkar and "Sind" (figures 25 and 26). As is probably the case with the one-third mohur described above, the coins with the mint name "Sind" were struck at Thatta. As these places were virtually in the charge of the Kalhoras, Nadir's coinage was issued as much under their direct authority as it was under his indirect suzerainty. His "Sind" rupees come in many varieties, but as a general rule they have a couplet mentioning his name and his exalted status as "Ruler of the World". The coinage was brought to an abrupt end when Nadir was murdered at Gulnabad in Iran at the behest of Ahmed Shah Abdali who went on to become the king of Afghanistan, leaving the Iranian part of Nadir's empire in anarchy only to be rescued a few years later by Karim Khan Zand. As his imperial patrimony from Nadir, Ahmed Shah received the provinces of Heart, Kandahar, Ghazna, Kabul, Balkh, Punjab, and Sindh. Upon his

25
Rupee of Nadir Shah, Bhakkar mint.

26
Rupee of Nadir Shah, "Sind" mint.

27

Rupee of Ahmed Shah Durrani, Bhakkar mint. The words in the cartouche read: *Durr-i-Durran* which was Ahmed Shah's title.

investiture, Ahmed Shah adopted the title *Durr-i-Durran* ("Pearl amongst Pearls") and thus heralded Durrani rule in Sindh.

However, nothing much changed politically in Sindh. The Kalhora chieftaincy rested in the hands of the prime minister, Diwan Gidumal at this juncture. He persuaded the Kalhora chief to acknowledge the Durrani overlordship – coins reflected the change by bearing a couplet in Ahmed Shah's name rather than that of Nadir Shah. The mints of "Sind" (probably Thatta) and Bhakkar remained active and struck coins in the name of Ahmed Shah and his successors, Taimur Shah, Zaman Shah, and Shah Shuja'a al-Mulk (figures 27 and 28).

Although the nominal sovereignty over Sindh rested with Afghan rulers all through the latter half of the 18th century, things on the ground changed dramatically after Ahmed Shah's death in 1772. In the ensuing decade, Sindh faced waves of marauding Afghan freebooters, whom the Kalhoras were unable to control. They relied heavily on Baluchi tribesmen for their military services. The Baluchis thus grew from strength to strength and a group of Baluchis named the Talpurs, led by Mir Fateh Ali Khan, ultimately overthrew the Kalhora regime by defeating Abdul Nabi, the last Kalhora ruler, at the battle of Halani in 1782. The Talpurs were the last indigenous elite to rule Sindh, collectively referred to as the "Mirs". Like their predecessors the Kalhoras, they nominally acknowledged Durrani supremacy but remained virtually independent. Sindh had three divisions under the Talpur Mirs, each headed by a branch of the Talpur family. Thus the Shahdadani Talpurs ruled at Haidarabad (Hyderabad, founded by the Kalhoras in 1768), the Sohrabanis at Khairpur, and the Mankanis at Mirpurkhas. Amongst these the Shahdadanis were the most powerful, controlling wide tracts of land and much of the fertile part along the Indus and its western banks.

During the first quarter of the 19th century, the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh grew powerful in the Punjab and established a kingdom that bordered on the northern limits of the Talpur principalities. Although Multan was firmly under Sikh control and coins bearing Sikh legends were struck there, further south the Talpur-dominated areas continued to strike coins in the name of Durrani rulers, possibly to counteract the Sikh hegemony in a token numismatic way. The coinage under the Talpurs in Sindh thus continued to bear the names Taimur Shah and Mahmud Shah Durrani. The most productive mints were Bhakkar and "Sind" (figure 29), but a mint also became operational at Haidarabad during the first decade of the 19th century. The mint name on its coins occurs as "Haidarabad Sind" (figure 30). Reference to Taimur Shah continues posthumously and his or Mahmud Shah's name is often inscribed within a cartouche on the obverse with the rest of the couplet celebrating their rule placed around it, although much of it is not visible as it is usually truncated.

The fear of the "Great Game" in the late 1830s led to Sindh being brought under British control by Sir Charles Napier, soon after the First Afghan War of 1838–40. The pretext was Baluchi tribesmen dishonouring a treaty signed by the Mirs that had allowed the British troops to pass through Sindh en route to Afghanistan. The Talpur troops were defeated successively at the battles of Miani and Haidarabad (February 17 and March 24, 1843). A controversy arose regarding the recklessness of the affair, especially in

28

Rupee of Taimur Shah Durrani, "Sind" mint.

29

Rupee struck in the name of Mahmud Shah Durrani by the Talpur Mirs, Bhakkar mint.

30

Rupee of "Haidarabad Sind" mint, struck by the Shahdadani Mirs in the name of Mahmud Shah Durrani.

the wake of British troops having suffered massive setbacks in the Afghan campaign, and this cost the viceroy Lord Ellenborough his tenure. But as a strategic preamble to the wars against weak descendants of Ranjit Singh and a courtly clique ruling in the Punjab, the conquest of Sindh proved vital for the British. Although the Talpur armies were defeated, the Sohrabani estate of Khairpur was allowed to exist as a "princely state". The rest of the province was amalgamated in the Bombay Presidency in 1847.

The principal mints in Sindh were kept in operation during the British occupation. The coin design did not change substantially in terms of the nominal Durrani acknowledgement, but on the coins of Bhakkar mint the British placed a rather striking mint-mark – that of a rampant lion – to indicate their authority (figure 1). These were by far the last coins of distinct character struck in Sindh. After the incorporation of Sindh into Bombay Presidency, the British Indian rupee was launched and that marked the termination of the local mints.

Independent currency returned to Sindh for a brief time during the Second World War, when serious shortfalls in small change prompted many native rulers of undivided India to alleviate it by issue of "Cash Coupons". This was an entirely arbitrary measure. Though the British Government did try and regulate it, many states simply got away by making the coupons look more like local revenue stamps – which they had the authority to print for themselves – but impressed on thick paper that would give them a bit of extra sturdiness. Khairpur, the last Talpur state, was one of these and issued stamp-sized paper money in the denomination of one anna (figure 31). The coupons are printed in green on pressboard; they have a shield-shaped cartouche surrounding the scalloped outline of a one-anna coin – thus even those illiterate would recognize its value. Within the scalloped shape are placed an Urdu inscription giving the value "ek anna" and the numeral "1", while the date (1942) and the name of the state, also in Urdu as "Riyasat Khairpur", occur in the shield-shaped cartouche. A serial number is printed on the reverse. An intricate pattern surrounds the shield; it most likely served as a minor security feature and along with the numbering system may have acted as a deterrent for forgeries. It is not known how long these coupons lasted, but they are pretty rare and as such one would imagine they must have had a very limited circulation.

31

One-anna cash coupon issued to alleviate the shortfall in small change, Khairpur state, 1942.

FIGURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All images courtesy Shailendra Bhandare.

1

Bust of a male dignitary, Mohenjodaro, 2000 BCE or earlier. Sandstone; h. 17.5 cm. The National Museum, Karachi. Photograph © J.M. Kenoyer, courtesy Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.

The Artistic Heritage of Early Sindh

Pratapaditya Pal

Of the two forms of major artistic expression – painting and sculpture – the surviving evidence in Sindh is sparse for the former and not as abundant for the latter as in other regions of India. Both, however, have a more ancient history in Sindh than elsewhere. The discoveries of the great Indus civilization, especially of Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro, provide copious material for assessing the artistic and aesthetic achievements of the early settlers of the region. They were deft craftsmen in a wide variety of material including clay, stone, bone, and metal – both base and precious. It will not be possible to provide an extensive review of the material here which would require at the least an entire book, but the brief account that follows, hopefully, will encourage others to write that book on the artistic heritage of the Indus civilization.

Both Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro, as well as other lesser sites, have yielded an enormous volume of plastic and glyptic material, albeit nothing monumental. Despite their diminutive sizes, the objects reveal an admirable mastery of carving stone and modelling clay. One of the finest examples of a stone sculpture though fragmentary is the often published bust of an elegantly attired male figure from Mohenjodaro traditionally identified as a priest-king (figure 1). Recent suggestion is that he may represent an "important clan or community leader."[1] Until we know the political system that prevailed in Mohenjodaro, a certain identification is difficult. Whether priest, king, or leader, the accomplished sculpture constitutes one of the earliest attempts at portraiture on the subcontinent. Although diminutive, the bust has a commanding presence and conveys the monumentality of a colossus. The unknown sculptor was a confident stone-carver and has deftly combined abstract form with realistic details in the expressive visage and the bold clover-patterned shawl worn in a manner that Indians still do today. The broad face is distinguished by a strong nose, a flat upper lip but a thick, sensuous lower lip (as will be common in later Indian art), narrow slit eyes as if self-absorbed in meditation, finely rendered linear beard, and hair held in place by a fillet around the head (a sign of distinction?) with a circle at the centre of the forehead. The armlet on the right arm is of the same design.

2

Square seal with multiple-headed animal, Mohenjodaro, 2000 BCE or earlier. Grey-brown steatite; 2.4 x 2.4 cm. Islamabad Museum, NMP 50.289. Photograph © J.M. Kenoyer, courtesy Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.

3

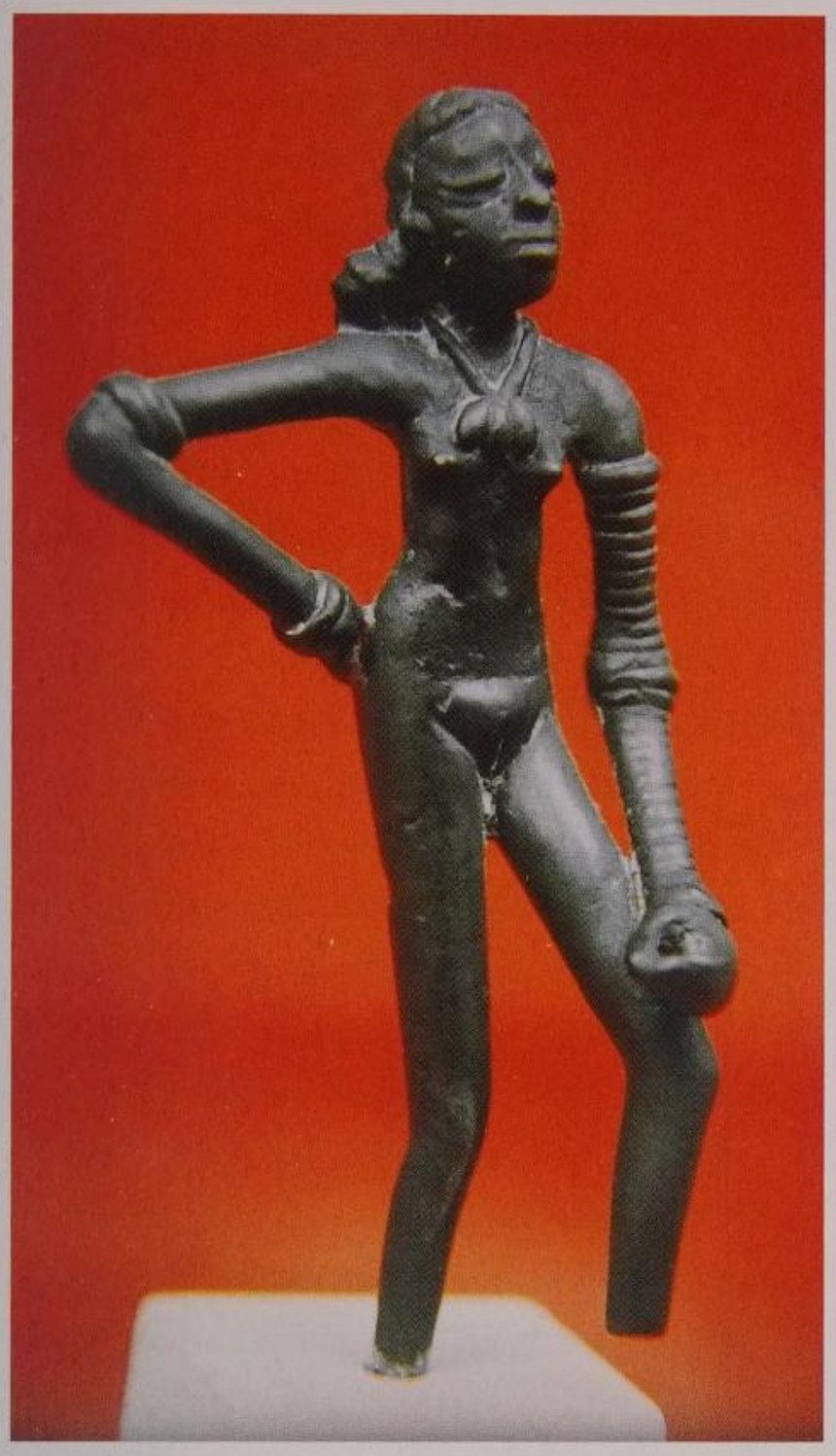
Square zebu bull seal, Harappa, 2000 BCE or earlier. Steatite. Photograph © J.M. Kenoyer, courtesy Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.

This ability to combine simplified form with abstract modelling and salient details in a naturalistic style also characterizes the famous seals of the Harappa civilization and the terracotta figurines, whether deities or dolls, toys or transportation models such as bullock carts. The artists of the Indus civilization were especially skilful with animals (figure 2 and Chakrabarti, figures 5–8) such as the bull, the elephant, the tiger, and the rhinoceros which obviously were familiar to the sculptors as they are well observed. The bull (figure 3) particularly was modelled with both realism and empathy which continued to be characteristic of later representations of the animal on the subcontinent.

The technological skill and aesthetic sensibility of the metalwork of the region is best illustrated by another oft-published figurine of a "dancing girl" (figure 4). Indeed, so widespread is this interpretation of this statuette that the contemporary poet Rita Shahani has penned a verse as follows:

> I am the dancer
> of Mohen-jo-Daro.
> For five thousand years,
> I have tread
> This slippery path:
> Khun Khun
> Khun Khun….[2]

Whether or not she is a dancer, that she is a young teenager seems evident. Her posture certainly reveals her confident but coquettish nature and the details of the negroid face could be interpreted as portraitlike. What is unusual is that she is completely nude except for ornaments. While only two bracelets adorn the akimbo right arm, the left is entirely covered with them. Her necklace consists of three mango(?)-shaped pendants at the end of a string. Her breasts are less prominent than one encounters in contemporary terracotta figurines (figure 6) but the mount of Venus and the navel, placed high, are emphasized.



4

Nude adolescent girl, Mohenjodaro, 2000 BCE or earlier. Metal; h. c. 10 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

5

Male spear thrower or dancer, Chanhudaro, 2000 BCE or earlier. Bronze; h. 4.1 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 36.2236. Photograph ©2008 MFA, Boston.

From the several bronze figurines found, we include here another example, this time representing a male, from Chanhudaro (figure 5). Though not as well preserved, he is elegant and animated and depicts the kind of movement and energy that one encounters in much later archaic Greek sculptures. Whether he is a spear thrower or dancer, this slim, athletic male deserves more attention than he has received hitherto.[3]

Finally, a few words about the terracotta and painted pottery produced in prehistoric Sindh. We have already mentioned the remarkably rich tradition of animal sculpture in stone as well as terracotta. The human figurines, mostly female (figure 6), recovered from both Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro are astonishingly varied for their modelling as well as accoutrement, especially for the diversity in ornaments and headdresses that express an urban sophistication encountered again in the terracotta figurines of the historical period. Unlike the metal girl (see

6

Female with luxurious adornments, Harappa, 2000 BCE or earlier. Terracotta. Photograph © J.M. Kenoyer, courtesy Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.

figure 4), in terracotta females the breasts are always emphasized, the arms are slender and tubular, and the torso is proportionately shaped with narrow waist and widening hips, though flatly rendered abdomen and pelvic area. The face, however, is proportionately small, pinched, and rather strange looking with large appliqué eyes. We do not know the precise function of these figurines, and as Kenoyer has aptly remarked:

> Terracotta figurines of women predominate in most sites and powerful female deities are depicted on seals along with male deities. These indicators suggest that some women of the cities may have had important social and ritual positions and that female deities played an important role in the legitimization of beliefs and political power.[4]

Certainly they have continued to do so in later Indian religious practices.

Examples of painting survive mostly on pottery and some terracotta animals and toys. Although not as rich as the sites of Mehrgarh or Harappa for the study of prehistoric painting on pottery, the example of a pot from Chanhudaro illustrated here (figure 7) clearly indicates the sophistication of the painter's skill. Painted strikingly in black on red background, it shows peacocks amid foliage in a wide band below the neck and a second register of the intersecting circle design – so familiar a feature of Indus pottery decoration. Although these paintings are monochromatic, they do reflect the sophistication of the art of graphic representation.

7

Painted storage jar, Chanhudaro, 2000 BCE or earlier. Terracotta with red slip and black decoration; 25 x 49.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 36.2977. Photograph ©2008 MFA, Boston.

Historic Sindh

We must wait for over two millennia to pick up the thread of our narrative. No sculptural remains between the Harappan civilization and the early centuries of the Common Era have been unearthed until the discovery of the Buddhist monastic establishment of Mirpurkhas early in the 20th century (see Mukherjee in this volume). The dating of the Mirpurkhas sculptures has proved to be a thorny issue among scholars. The earliest detailed study of these remains since their first publication by Henry Cousens, the excavator, in 1919 was by Moti Chandra in the late 1950s.[5] This was followed up by Johanna van Lohuizen who published an extensive article on the antiquities of pre-Islamic Sindh in 1981.[6] While Moti Chandra dated the sculptures to the 5th century, van Lohuizen was more cautious and argued for a 6th-century date. However, much of van Lohuizen's reasoning was based on the evidence of Ajanta about which too there is controversy. If one follows the chronology of Ajanta as suggested by Walter Spink, then the last quarter of the 5th century would be more

appropriate for Mirpurkhas.[7] We will split the difference and suggest a date around 500 CE.

What is significant is that the sculptures of Mirpurkhas generally reflect the aesthetic norms and stylistic characteristics that were widely prevalent across northern India. Terracotta appears to have been an important artistic medium during the Gupta period (c. 300–600) from Gandhara/Kashmir in the northwest to Bengal in the east. Clay was used with equal felicity by both Brahmanical and Buddhist patrons.[8] Sindh appears to have been no exception and apart from Mirpurkhas, terracotta remains have been found also at such sites as Jerruk, Thul-Mir-Rukal, and Sudheranjodaro. All these sites have yielded Buddhist material. The scarcity of significant Brahmanical sculptures, either in clay or stone, is really surprising, as is that of stone Buddhist remains. One fragmentary image of the Buddha has been recovered from Mirpurkhas that may depict Shakyamuni's enlightenment if the foliage above represents the bodhi tree. However, hovering among the foliage is an ascetic rather than the more usual flying angelic garland-bearers.

More typical of Mirpurkhas are large panels of the Buddha, invariably shown in meditation but with no narrative intent (figure 8; see also Mukherjee, figure 2). If the posture is unvarying, there is considerable diversity in details that deserve a more exhaustive study than have been devoted to them to date. Perhaps the most distinctive is another panel illustrated here (figure 9). Moti Chandra has described it as follows:

> The physiognomy is different and may indicate Central Asian influence. The face is almost round with full cheeks, closed slanting eyes, snub nose and flat chin. The lotus seat is very prominently depicted; the halo is decorated with solid triangles and circles. The background is formed of acanthus leaves; the frame is decorated with dentils and circles.[9]

8

Large panel showing the Buddha in meditation, Mirpurkhas. 500 CE.Terracotta; 62 cm. Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

9

Panel showing the Buddha in meditation, Mirpurkhas, 500 CE. Terracotta. Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

10

Courtly male, Mirpurkhas, 500 CE. Terracotta; H. 76 cm. Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

Among the other items recovered from Mirpurkhas, perhaps the most outstanding and unique is a standing figure of a handsome male (figure 10). Remarkably well preserved and modelled in high relief, it is noteworthy also for the survival of much of its polychromy. Scholars differ as to his identity, whether he represents a donor or a bodhisattva. Lohuizen strongly argued for a bodhisattva identification by a comparison with the famous figure of the so-called Padmapani in Cave 1 at Ajanta.[10] The problem is, in neither instance does the figure grasp the flower by the stalk with the left hand as Padmapani does with few exceptions from the Kushan period on. Instead, both figures hold the flower with the right hand as a lotus of dalliance (*lilakamala*). Neither is given a halo behind the head and while the Ajanta figure has a tall *kiritamukuta*, rarely if ever worn by Padmapani, the Mirpurkhas figure has no headgear at all but a typical Gupta-period hairstyle reminiscent of a judge's wig with sausage curls falling down the shoulders. Thus, the exact identity of this suavely modelled, elegant figure must remain a mystery and for the present "Courtly Male" seems to be a safe designation.

Clearly there are a number of features here and in other reliefs that can be seen also in Gandhara images. Prominent are the solid triangles, possibly stylized rays of light, the manner of draping the entire body with the shawl or robe, and the use of the acanthus motif. But the treatment of the stylized leaves of the plant, as if attached like wings especially to the Buddha's shoulders, as far as I know, is unique to this relief. Also distinctive are the three parallel undulating folds of the robe across the midriff and the projecting end like a piece of carpet below the Buddha's legs. Not only do these differences distinguish this Buddha from all the others of the group, but an exact parallel in any other region remains unknown.

Mention of two other terracotta panels from Sudheranjodaro will bring this brief discussion of the Buddhist art of Sindh to a close. One of these represents a narrative scene from the life of the Buddha Shakyamuni (figure 11). Related to the cycle of the Great Departure, it is the moment of truth when in the middle of the night he is about to slip away from his slumbering wife. The composition clearly follows the narrative mode of Gandhara though here the artist has made the nimbate Siddhartha a contemplative figure; his left arm seems to be raised to his chin. Yashodhara is fast asleep on her side, facing the viewer. Below the bed are a group of female musicians who also have fallen asleep. The figures above are likely celestials watching the act of renunciation.

11

The Great Departure, Sudheranjodaro, 6th century. Terracotta panel. Photographed during the 1909 excavation by the Archaeological Survey of India. Photograph: ASI archives.

The other relief – one of three – represents a Buddha seated on an elaborate lion throne within a shrine (figure 12, see also Mukherjee, figure 3). His posture is known as *pralambapadasana* (with extended legs) or *bhadrasana* (auspicious posture) and his hands display the gesture of teaching or literally turning the wheel of the Law (*dharmachakra-pravartanamudra*). The elaborate throne with lions, leogryphs, and ganders clearly emphasizes the Buddha's regal nature. The plain columns of the shrine on either side carry lion capitals supporting the chaitya window arch. Moti Chandra published another similar relief which he wrongly assigned to Mirpurkhas and dated to the 5th century.[11] The theme is familiar both in Gandhara and the Gupta-period caves of the Deccan, such as Kanheri and Ajanta. But nowhere is the throne as elaborate as in these Sindh reliefs, which may indicate a 6th- rather than a 5th-century date. Whatever the exact date, we have a choice in identifying the Buddha. He may represent the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, or the future Buddha Maitreya preaching in the Tushita heaven, which is more likely.

12

Buddha on an elaborate lion throne within a shrine, Sudheranjodaro, 6th century. Terracotta panel. Photographed during the 1909 excavation by the Archaeological Survey of India. Photograph: ASI archives.

13 and 14a–c

Four-headed Brahma, Mirpurkhas, c. 6th century CE. Brass; h.122 cm. The National Museum, Karachi. Photographs: from Karl J. Khandalavala and Asharani Mathur, eds., *Indian Bronze Masterpieces*, Brijbasi, 1998 (13); ASI archives (14a-c).

Limited as the surviving Buddhist material in Sindh is, even more sparse are remnants of Brahmanical art. Indeed, one of the great cities of Sindh was named Brahmanabad from where a great many fragments of Hindu stone images have been discovered, according to Cousens. Lohuizen has published two of these fragments, one of which is an elaborate surround of an image, whose present location is unknown.[12] The other is a fragment of a Vishnu, whose lower left hand grasps a conch. The manner in which he grasps the conch, inserting his fingers in the lip, clearly indicates a connection with Gujarat. Excavations have also revealed the remains of a Shiva temple below a mosque in the port city of Banbhore at Debal (see Shah in this volume). In a recent reappraisal of the site the Pakistani archaeologist Muhammad Ishtiaq Khan has convincingly argued for the existence of an earlier Shiva temple (below the mosque) destroyed during the Arab invasion of 712 CE:

> Many decorative structural elements of Hindu origin have been found from various parts of the structure....
> As mentioned earlier large size Śiva *lingas* were found, forming the lowest steps of the flight of stairs in all the doorways.[13]

The great Shiva temple of Banbhore may well have been one of 30 Brahmanical temples that existed in Sindh around 642 during the visit of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang.[14]

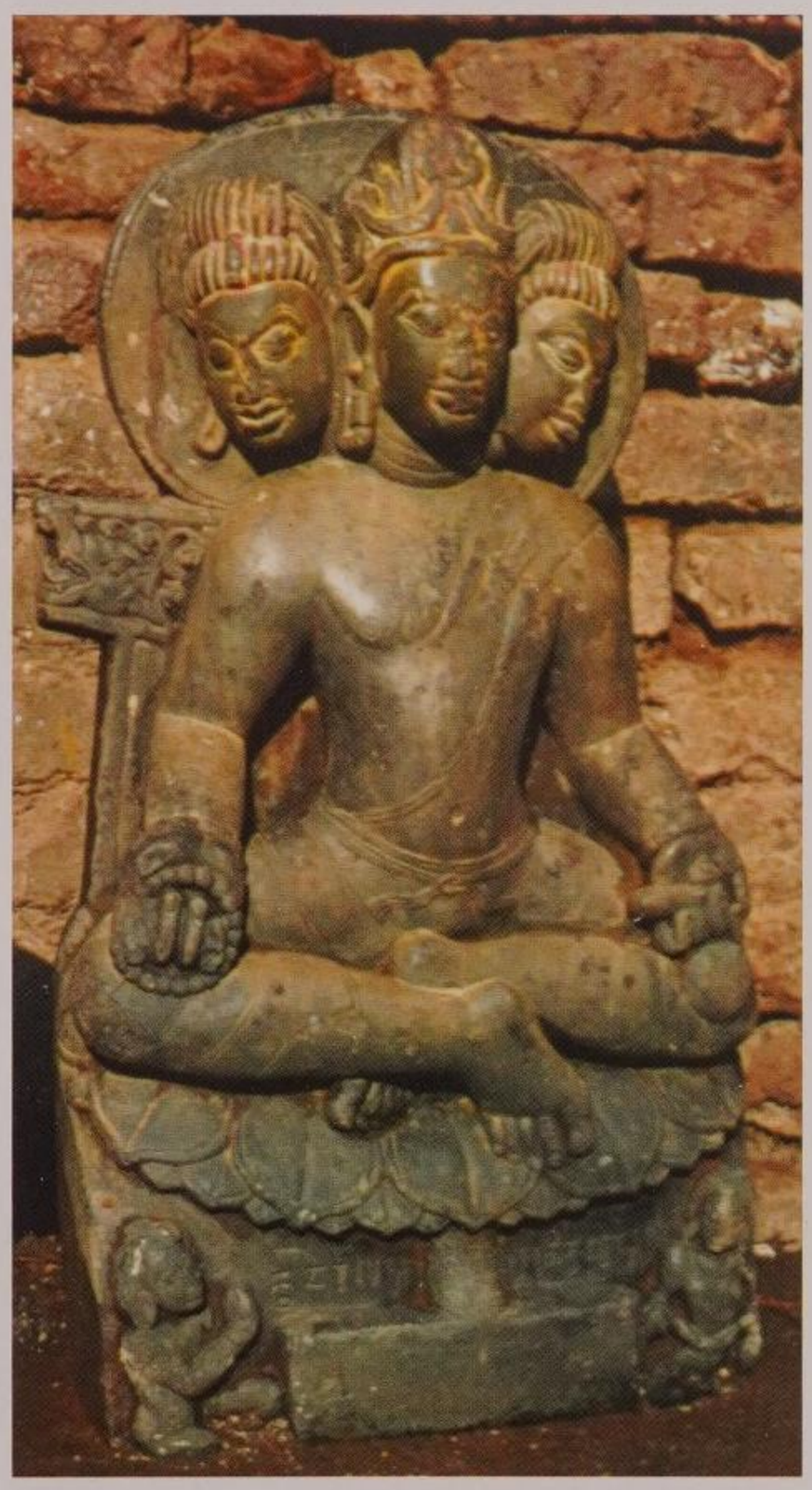
What has survived miraculously is a significant brass figure of Brahma of impressive proportions (figures 13 and 14). Now in the Karachi Museum, it was found near Mirpurkhas. Lohuizen correctly suggested that the left hand of the deity held a small pot by the stem which still remains attached. As is usually the case with Brahma he has four heads, though with youthful faces rather than bearded, as is appropriate for a deity addressed as grandfather (*pitamaha*). Incongruous, however, is the potbelly which is clearly a sign of middle age rather than youth.[15] Apart from his elaborate hairdo, the antelope skin slung over his left shoulder clearly indicates his ascetic nature. With its elegantly rendered pleats, the dhoti wraps his legs tightly and is secured by

narrow strings whose ends hang over both thighs.

Invariably in early Buddhist art Brahma is represented with only two arms as a bearded brahman. While in early texts he came to have four heads and four arms, in the artistic tradition, as in the Chapagaon Brahma in Nepal (figure 15), he still has only two arms though the number of heads has increased.[16] Both epigraphically and stylistically this Brahma figure can be dated to the first half of the 6th century. There too the left hand grasps a pot by the neck but the right hand holds a rosary and the faces are not bearded. What is unusual about the Mirpurkhas Brahma is the gesture of the right hand which has the palm facing inward and the fingers pointing upward, as if beckoning. This particular gesture, along with several other features such as the physiognomy, the naturalistic modelling of the body, the manner of holding the waterpot, clearly establish the figure's link with Gandhara and Kashmir.[17]

Thus, although only one metal image of a Brahmanical deity has survived from Sindh proper, it is an outstanding example of art both for its technical finesse and aesthetic flair. Assuming that it was created locally rather than imported from elsewhere, we must consider it a work of a master sculptor such as Gugga of Chamba. Around 700 CE he created some spectacular brass images for Meruvarman of Chamba which are still in worship today.[18] Both stylistically and technically the Sindh Brahma has a close kinship with Gugga's masterpieces. It should also be mentioned that geographically closer to Sindh, at Vasantgadh in Rajasthan, there is a brick temple in which a life-size image of a standing Brahma with three faces and two hands, holding rosary and waterpot, belonging to the 7th century, is the focus of worship.[19] Could the Sindh Brahma have been related to this image? In any event, what can be stated with conviction is that this magnificent brass Brahma was likely the principal image in a temple of the god in the neighbourhood of Mirpurkhas.

A few comments about a group of ivory objects discovered by A.F. Bellasis in 1854–56 at Brahmanabad (figure 16). Now mostly in the British Museum, they were extensively discussed by the art historian Douglas Barrett almost a century after their recovery.[20] Correctly surmising that the ivories belonged to a box of some kind, Barrett suggested that they were probably made somewhere in central India, perhaps ancient Malwa, and transported to Brahmanabad by a trader. Lohuizen too concurred with Barrett's view.[21] However, the movement of an ivory carver from Malwa to Sindh is also a possibility. Considering their contemporaneity, it would be interesting to compare these fragments with the damaged surround of the Surya image (see Introduction), a task that must be postponed for another occasion.

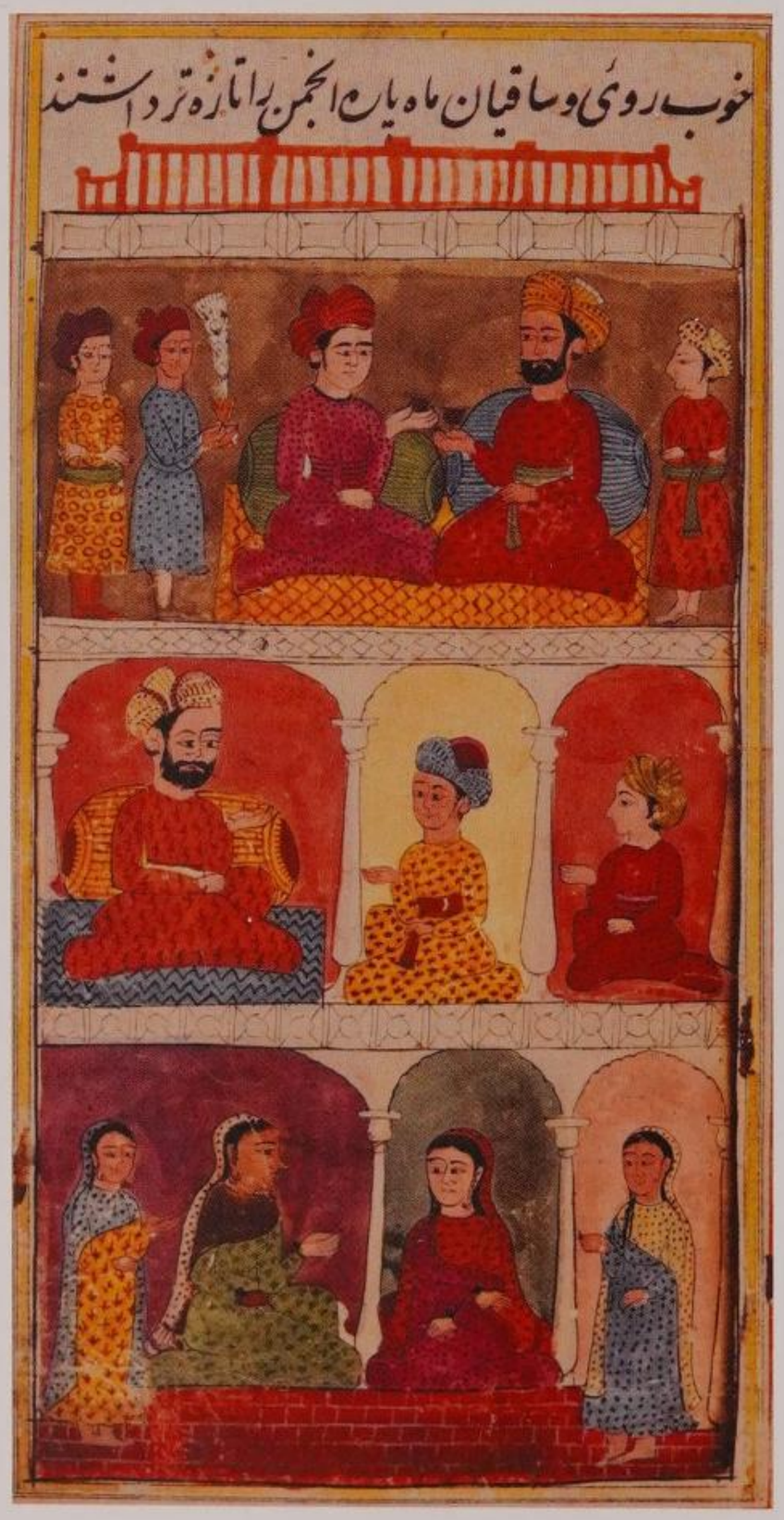


15
Brahma, Chapagaon, Nepal, 500–550 CE. Grey stone. Photograph courtesy Mary Slusser.

16a and b

Female figures of carved ivory, discovered at Brahmanabad. H.12 cm and 6.5 cm. British Museum, 1857. 1118.1 and 3.
© Trustees of the British Museum. Given by A.F. Bellasis.

In conclusion, the artistic remains of prehistoric Sindh, especially from Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro are abundant. While they have been generally studied in the context of the Indus civilization, they deserve to be assessed as the aesthetic efforts of the earliest inhabitants of Sindh. Similarly, though not as abundant, the sculptural remnants of the historical period, especially of the Buddhist material, could easily be the subject of a substantial monograph.[22] Few as they are they reflect a flourishing artistic tradition of historic Sindh. Though some metal and ivory objects have also been found, what is really curious is the scarcity of stone sculptures even in fragmentary condition. Perhaps the sculptural heritage of Sindh still lies buried in its soil and sands waiting to be unearthed.



17

Taj al-Muluk bestowing slave girls on Sayf al-Muluk. Painting by Sa'id, from *Sayf al-Muluk wa-Badi' al-Jamál*, Thatta, 1775. © British Library Board. All rights reserved. Or. 8758.f.54.

While no paintings from historic Sindh of the pre-Islamic period have survived, it is surprising that the long presence of Muslims with their admiration for penmanship as an art form and love for illustrated books has left such a paltry legacy. Writing in 1969 about an illustrated manuscript completed in Thatta in 1755 the late M. Idris Siddiqi commented:

> To the best of my knowledge it is the earliest illustrated work known to have been executed in Sind; and its many miniatures may make an important contribution in the future study of painting in Sind. These miniatures are rather archaic but possess a peculiar charm and certain features not to be found in the contemporary schools of painting in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent. These features are the characteristic representation of the vernacular culture of Sind although it is premature to single out these miniatures as "Sindhi Painting".[23]

Assiduously Siddiqi has made a case for identifying a Sindhi idiom in the illustrations of this unique illuminated manuscript of the romance *Sayf al-Muluk wa-Badi' al-Jamál*, now in the British Library (figure 17). But unfortunately there has been little progress since then to advance our knowledge of either Islamic calligraphy or painting in Sindh. The virgin still awaits her gallant knight.

NOTES

1 Jonathan Mark Kenoyer and Kimberly Heuston, *The Ancient South Asian World* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 62.

2 From *Freedom and Fissures: An Anthology of Sindhi Partition Poetry*, translated by Anju Makhija and Menka Shivdasani with Arjan "Shad" Mirchandani (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1998).

3 The sculpture is described and published in Jonathan M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization* (Karachi: OUP, 1998), p. 36 and cat. no. 145. This is the best study of sculptures of prehistoric Sindh.

4 Ibid., p. 133.

5 Moti Chandra, "A Study in the Terracottas from Mirpurkhas", *Prince of Wales Museum Bulletin*, 7(1959–62), pp. 1–22.

6 Johanna van Lohuizen, "The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sind", in Hamida Khuhro (ed.), *Sind Through the Centuries* (Karachi: OUP, 1981), pp. 43–57. Strange that the author did not discuss the Indus material.

7 Walter M. Spink, *Ajanta: History and Development*, Vol. 1: *The End of the Golden Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

8 Curiously, the Jains do not seem to have made use of terracotta as an art form. Is it because they fear using clay would involve killing living creatures? In any case, as far as is known, no remains of Jain monuments have yet been found in Sindh.

9 Chandra, op. cit., p. 12.

10 Benoy K. Behl, *The Ajanta Caves* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), p. 69.

11 Chandra, op. cit., fig. 46.

12 Lohuizen, op. cit., Pl. II and Pl. XIV for Vishnu fragment.

13 Muhammad Ishtiaq Khan, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore: A Reappraisal", *Ancient Pakistan,* XV (2002), pp. 1–14.

14 Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, 2 vols. (reprint, San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc. 1975), vol. II, pp. 252–54.

15 Curiously in early texts such as the *Brihatsamhita* of Varahamihira (6th century) nothing is said about Brahma's physical appearance.

16 It should be noted that as is described in texts the Chapagaon Brahma is seated on a lotus whereas the Sindh Brahma is standing, as is the case with an image in Vasantgadh to be discussed presently, and a small Brahma with personified Vedas from Kashmir now in Berlin. See P. Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir* (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1975), pp. 54–55, where in fact he also has one head but four arms.

17 Ibid., nos. 38–39, pp. 122–23.

18 See P. Pal, "Munificent Monarch and a Superior Sculptor: Eighth Century Chamba", in Vidya Dehejia (ed.), *Royal Patrons and Great Temple Art* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988).

19 J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 2nd edition, 1956), p. 514. There is also the famous temple of Khed Brahma in Idar that is relevant to this discussion.

20 Douglas Barrett, "A Group of Medieval Indian Ivories", *Oriental Art*, New Series Vol. 1, No. 2 (1995), pp. 47–51. Also for the Belassis citation.

21 Lohuizen, op. cit., p. 51. It should be noted that Barrett also mentions the existence of other antiquities that are supposed to be somewhere in Oxford but I have not been able to track them down.

22 I am indebted to Sabyasachi Mukherjee of the CSMVS and his staff for their help with the Buddhist material and to Nancy Sutherland of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Research Library for her help with bibliographic references.

23 M. Idris Siddiqi, "An Illustrated Manuscript from Sind", in R. Pinder-Wilson (ed.), *Paintings from Islamic Lands* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1969), pp. 172–86.

a

b

c

The Reconstruction of a Buddhist Stupa at Mirpurkhas

Sabyasachi Mukherjee

Traversing the northwestern regions of Sindh valley in 629–645 CE, the Chinese traveller Xuanzang wrote in his memoirs:

> When *Tathagata* was in the world, he frequently passed through this country, therefore Asoka-raja has founded several tens of stupas in places where the sacred traces of his presence were found. Upagupta, the great *Arhat*, sojourned very frequently in this kingdom, explaining the law and convincing and guiding men. The places where he stopped and the traces he left are all commemorated by the building of *Sangharamas* or the erection of stupas. These buildings are seen everywhere.[1]

He also stated that in the several *sangharamas* (monasteries) in the area, a large body of priests numbering about 10,000, practised Hinayana Buddhism.

All that survived of these Buddhist monuments of Sindh into the 20th century were remnants of several ruined Buddhist structures cluttered around the valley. The one exception was a Buddhist stupa at Kahujodaro in Mirpurkhas. Much of this monument lay buried under the ground almost in its original condition, waiting to be unearthed by archaeologists at the beginning of the 20th century. This stupa was part of a ruined Buddhist establishment situated in one of the large mounds extending over about 30 acres (some 12 hectares) of land to the north of the present town of Mirpurkhas, today district headquarters of Thar and Parkar in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

1a-c
opposite
Decorative bricks, Mirpurkhas, 5th century BCE.
a Acanthus leaf with a cone. 5 x 15 cm.
b Latticed screen. 21.1 x 14.5 cm.
c Acanthus-leaf moulding. 39 x 25 cm.

2

Panel showing seated Buddha, Mirpurkhas, 5th century BCE. Terracotta. Victoria and Albert Museum, IM.13-1931. © V&A Images, London.

Discovery of the Site

Like many great archaeological finds, the Mirpurkhas stupa was a chance discovery. The site was initially noticed by General John Jacob, who was then Acting Commissioner in Sindh, but he did not understand its importance. In 1859 James Gibbs described the site as remains of a brick platform or "*thul*" and removed a fine earthenware pot from the upper part of the hollow chamber, which contained some pieces of crystal and amethyst. The whereabouts of these finds are now unknown. Mr Woodburn, the Collector of Hyderabad (Sindh), rescued a large terracotta seated Buddha image (figure 2) and the head of a second image from railway contractors in 1894. However, the historical importance of the Mirpurkhas stupa remained unknown till Henry Cousens, then Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Western Circle, excavated the site in 1909–10.

It was actually Mr Mackenzie, Deputy Commissioner of Hyderabad, who requested Cousens to spare a day to visit the site in February 1909 as the government wanted to use the bricks of the mound to fill up cavities in the adjoining areas. Cousens wrote, "This I did and was surprised to find that there was so much of the stupa, which occupied the centre of the north end of the general site, still remaining."[2] One of the finest terracotta Buddhist monuments was thus saved from extinction.

He had already resolved at that time, "those [images] which I removed will eventually be housed in the new Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay."[3] According to his desire, a large number of antiquities obtained from the excavations were shifted to the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay (now the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya [CSMVS]), in 1919. The collection consists of 297 moulded bricks and architectural fragments, five large seated Buddha images in high relief, and a smaller image in a frame, a standing male figure in relief (identified as a devotee) (see Pal, figures 8–10) two roundels depicting the image of Kubera, a few rectangular bricks bearing the image of Jambhala (?), a large number of sun-dried clay tablets, and also a tiny fragment of stone depicting a Jataka scene.

Archaeological Remnants from the Site

Unfortunately, the site was found to be badly destroyed by the railway contractors who had been using the upper-level ornamental bricks for laying the rail lines. What was visible at the time of excavation was a block of sun-dried bricks projecting from a heap of rubbish. The circular base of the stupa, revealed on the top of a square platform, was probably a part of the earliest structure, which later supported a beautiful stupa. This must have been once surmounted by a large *harmika* (square capital), which

contained the sacred relics presumably of some Buddhist saint. The casket containing these relics was later handed over to the Mahabodhi Society, Sarnath. The relics were enshrined in the new Mulagandhakuti Vihara there.[4]

The stone relic casket at the Mirpurkhas stupa also contained a small crystal bottle covered with white sand, and a number of offerings consisting of coral and crystal beads, seed pearls, four gold beads, one small gold wire ring, ten copper coins, some small lumps of charcoal, a few grains of unidentified material, and some other odd beads. Inside the crystal bottle was a small silver cylindrical case containing some minute object the size of a pin-head and some dust, wrapped in a gold leaf. The existence of two relics in two different containers raised the question of the relics of two persons in the same reliquary, in the minds of the excavators. Similar relic stone caskets were found in the ruined stupa of Panahiam Jhar at Saheth-Maheth in Uttar Pradesh, dated by Sir John Marshall between the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE, and in the Boria stupa near Junagadh in Kathiawar, Gujarat (now in the Junagadh museum) of the same period. The identification of the Mirpurkhas stupa relics has remained a mystery in the absence of any inscription and other literary evidence, but their importance should not be overlooked.

Originally there were 11 terracotta relief panels of seated Buddhas in the niches of the four faces of the platform – three large panels (about 65 cm in height) on each of the north, east, and south faces, and two smaller panels on either side of the entrance to the stupa on the west face. At the time of the excavation, only seven large images and a small one were found in situ. Images were missing from the southern niche on the east face, the eastern niche on the south face, and the northern side of the entrance on the west face. The two large missing images were probably those rescued from the railway contractors by Mr Woodburn, as already mentioned, and now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (see figure 2). All these terracotta sculptures were originally painted.

According to the excavator, only six Buddha images were removed from the four faces of the platform for safekeeping. However, in the CSMVS collection, there is one image of the Buddha from this group, seated cross-legged on a low stool in the Gandharan style, bearing the same site number, which does not find any mention in the excavation reports.

Mirpurkhas is probably the only site in this region which has yielded so many relief panels of the Buddha images, so far. Stupas at other sites in the region such as Thul-Mir-Rukal, Sudheranjodaro, and Deparghangro were probably also exclusively decorated with terracotta work.

The site of Mirpurkhas has also yielded hundreds of sun-dried votive clay tablets, almost identical with those discovered from Nalanda and Sarnath in eastern India. These votive tablets were used by devotees who came on pilgrimage as offerings, and were heaped in front of the three shrines at the entrance to the stupa. They were found along with copper coins just about 15 cm below ground level. The remaining artefacts in the collection of the museum are mainly of decorative nature, and likely adorned the outer face of the base as well as of the stupa.

Religious Inspiration and Artistic Imagery

The largest and most comprehensive collection of finds from the Mirpurkhas stupa being at the CSMVS, it provides a rich source to examine the religious as well as artistic activities of the 5th–6th-century inhabitants of the site.

It is significant that, except for images of the Buddha, the site has not yielded any outstanding Mahayana images. Though several contemporary Buddhist monuments

3

Clay tablets bearing images of the Buddha and inscriptions, Mirpurkhas, 7th/8th century. Height c. 4–9 cm.

a

b

c

4a-c

Decorative bricks, Mirpurkhas, 5th century BCE.

a Stylized plant flanked by acanthus-leaf sheaves. 36 x 24 cm.

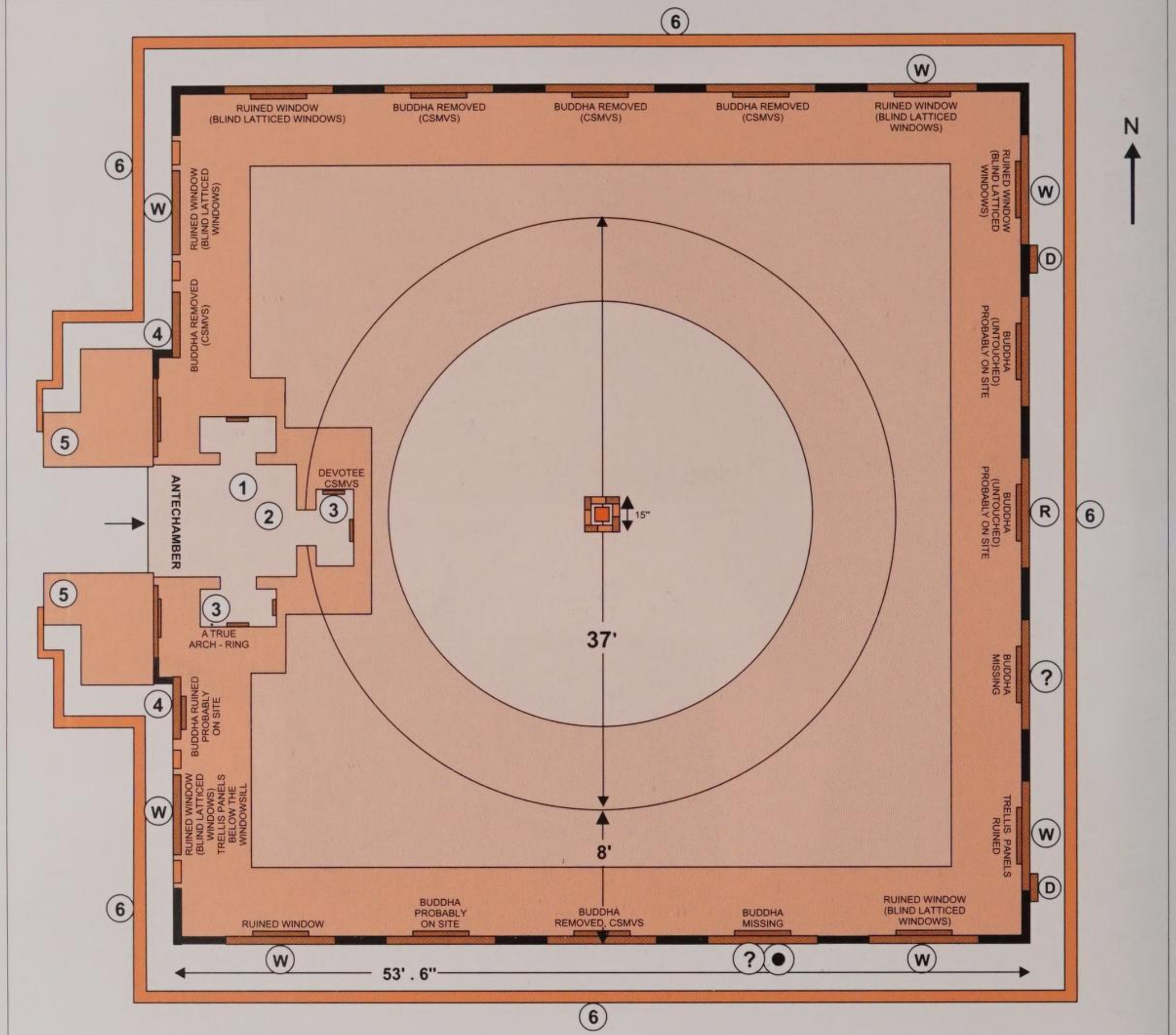
b Corinthian pilaster. 17 x 16 cm.

c Mask with stylized floral background.

in the eastern and western parts of India are replete with bodhisattva figures, the considerable remains from Mirpurkhas do not even indicate the possibility of a bodhisattva image here. However, the presence of Kubera and Jambhala images tenuously connect the site with the Mahayana tradition.

Moreover, the stupa structure, made of sun-dried bricks, predates the decorative terracottas and bricks. From a study of the site it is obvious that the original stupa structure was erected by devotees of orthodox Hinayana Buddhism who had only marginally accepted the Mahayana tenets. The fact is corroborated by the records of contemporary Chinese travellers.

Xuanzang in the second quarter of the 7th century mentioned that Buddhism was at its peak in the Sindh region and the local ruler was a Buddhist. Yi Jing (671–695 CE) observed that the Sammitiya sect of the Hinayana tradition dominated the region. The Sammitiya sect had been quite popular and widespread during the 3rd–4th centuries CE, as is evident from one of the earliest inscriptions at Sarnath which states that around the 3rd century this sect drove Sarvastivadins out of the place. Later they became more prominent at the time of Harshavardhana (606–647). Yi Jing also recorded the presence of a large number of monasteries of this period from Ahichhatra, Shravasti, Vaishali, Sarnath,



KEY

1. In front of the three shrines was a great quantity of loose debris from which deposit 100 unburnt clay tablets and copper coins were recovered. They were found about 15 cm above ground level.
2. In front of the central shrine door was found a terracotta stamp for making such tablets.
3. In the middle and south shrines a portion of the roofing was found. The middle shrine was wagon-vaulted, with forward corbelled bricks, the vault running from front to back.
4. There is a smaller Buddha image on the west face of the stupa, on the north side of the shrines, in a peculiarly designed frame. A similar one (ruined) on the south side shows the remains of the frame.
5. Possibly there was a staircase leading to the platform above the shrines and round the base of the circular tower.
6. The external wall, 4 or 5 metres from the main structure is of the same burnt brick type, with bricks of about 41 cm length.
7. Buddha images were found inside at the time of excavation.

CSMVS – Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly Prince of Wales Museum of Western India)

R Ruined Buddha image (not removed by the excavation)

W Windows

? Missing

● The Buddha image (now at the V&A Museum) was probably rescued by Mr Woodburn from the railway contractor.

■ As the upper layer of bricks was removed, a little chamber in the middle about 38 cm square, revealed itself. Within this reposed a stone coffer composed of two thick flat circular stones, roughly dressed to shape, about 33 cm in diameter and 12–15 cm thick.

D On the eastern face, between these large panels and the shrines were two smaller panels, one on each side, of peculiar outline: that on the north side holding a small image of a seated Buddha, with hands broken off, while the one on the south side has been mostly destroyed.

5

Reconstruction plan of the Kahujodaro stupa at Mirpurkhas.

Kapilavastu, Malwa, Vallabbhi, and the Sindh region.[5]

It is very likely therefore that the original sun-dried brick stupa structure of Mirpurkhas was purely Hinayana in character. In all probability it had existed at least for a couple of centuries before the introduction of Buddha images. The Mahayana influence is evident in the 11 Buddha relief panels on the platform. These and other smaller panels must have been added later as a result of the Sammitiya sect accepting the image of the Buddha in their religious practices.

Buddhism survived even after the Arab conquest of this region in 711 CE, as is evident from the presence of hundreds of unbaked clay votive tablets and Arab copper coins found at the entrance to the stupa. The clay tablets in the CSMVS collection are of different sizes, varying from about 4 to 9 cm in length, and are mostly oval in shape. Most of the tablets bear an inscription under the image of the Buddha or stupa "*Ye dharma*" in characters of the 7th or the 8th century similar to those found from Nalanda (figure 3).

The bricks found at the site were in a great variety of patterns and of fine workmanship. Being stylistically akin to similar remains from the Gandhara region, the Hellenistic influence in ornamental details was apparent. Among these designs were several forms of fret, chequers, rosettes, lozenges, palmettes, T-pattern moulding, stylized leaf, acanthus, and other motifs (figures 1 and 4).

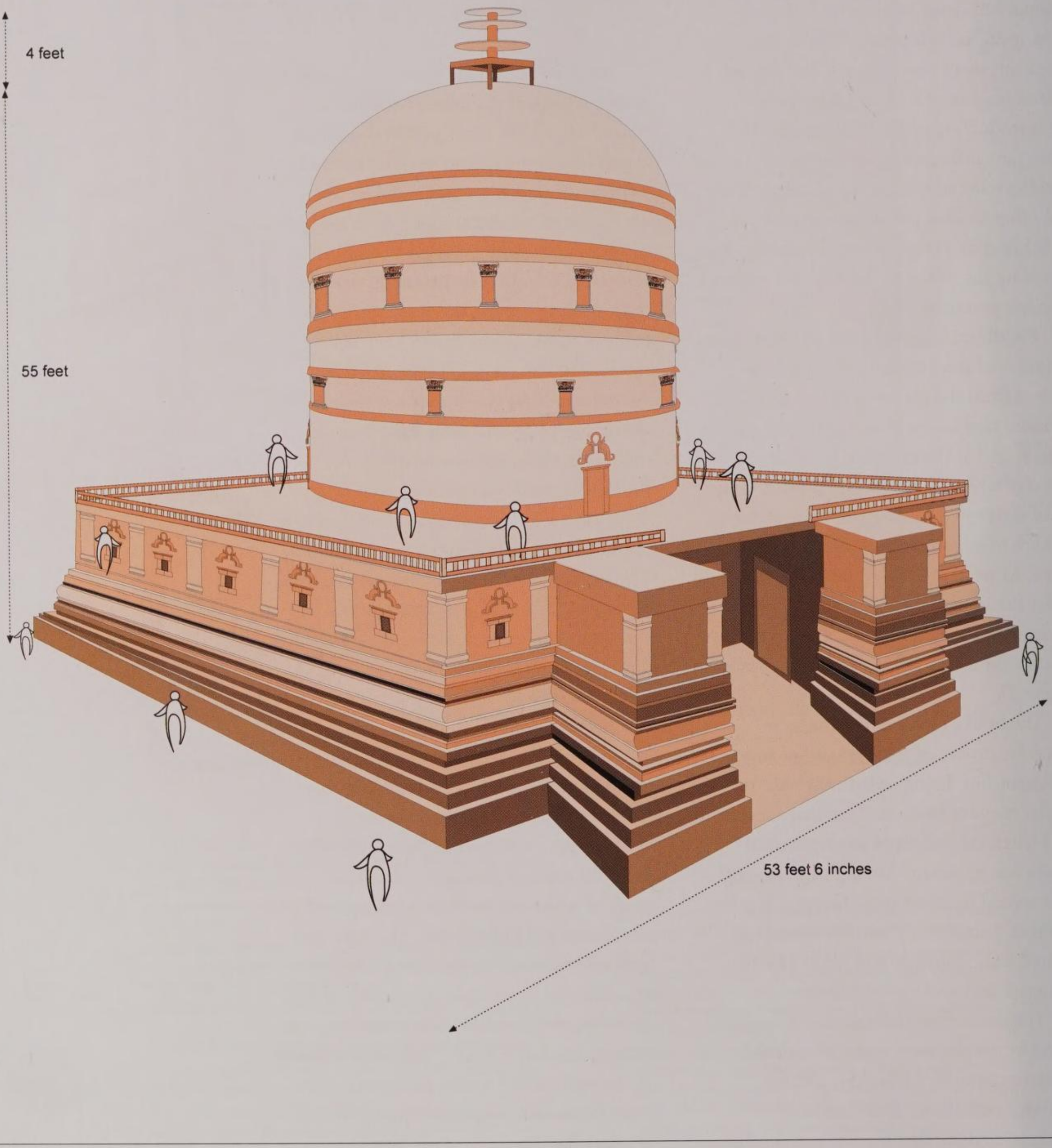
The decorative architectural fragments found at the site were mainly beautiful terracotta moulded pilasters, arches, capitals, medallions, and dentils of brackets. Stylistically, the terracotta images of Mirpurkhas combine not only the Gupta and Gandhara traditions but also reflect some characteristics from distant Amaravati, Ajanta, Rangmahal, and Ter. Pronounced Gupta influence is apparent in the highly decorated *prabhavali* (halo), round modelling and smooth curves of the face and body, half-closed eyes, shapely eyelids, and characteristic earlobes (see Pal, figure 8).

Each of the seated Buddhas found in the niches of the platform walls is placed on a high lotus pedestal with an *asana* (cushion) spread over it. Both the *prabhavali* and the relief framing the entire panel are decorated with a design of four- and eight-petalled flowers. A remarkable feature of Buddha's drapery is an undergarment that extends slightly beyond the *sanghati* (robe) that covers the folded legs. It is evident from the *Mahavagga* that the Buddha was particular about the code of conduct for monks, including their manner of dress. A Buddhist monk was supposed to wear three robes: a double waist cloth, a single upper robe, and a single undergarment. The undergarment seen beneath the robe of the Buddha is this *antaravasa* which was wrapped around the loins and reached down to the knee.[6]

Reconstruction

At the time of excavation, Cousens observed that the stupa had suffered some structural imbalance due to the weight of the upper tower pressing more directly upon the walls of the square plinth, as a result of which the walls showed signs of subsidence and bulging out. The walls had been subsequently fortified by providing an additional outer layer. According to the excavator, this had helped in preserving the images, decorative bricks, and other artefacts on the walls of the square platform of the stupa for so many centuries (figure 5).

An effort has been made here to reconstruct the stupa of Mirpurkhas, one of the few examples of decorative stupa architecture in the Indus valley, with the help of surviving architectural fragments and other artefacts in the collection of the



6

Reconstruction perspective view of the Kahujodaro stupa from the northwest.

7
Reconstruction view of the Kahujodaro stupa from the north face.

CSMVS. It would have been difficult to imagine the original shape of the stupa merely on the basis of these fragmentary remains. However, interpreting these in the light of the other contemporary stupas enables us to get a fairly accurate idea of the original stupa of Mirpurkhas.

The grand entrance

One can easily imagine the magnificent scene around the stupa in the valley of Kahujodaro. The main stupa with its *harmika* stood nearly 20 metres tall, inspiring approaching devotees and pilgrims from a long distance, from all four directions, with its towering presence. Thousands of local devotees and those from all over India, and perhaps other countries as well, must have thronged there to pay their respects to the great soul/souls whose corporeal remains were enshrined in this stupa.

Approaching from the west, they would have reached the main entrance to the stupa which must have been embellished with decorative bricks and possibly with a *torana* (gate), as at Sanchi. Passing through the gate, they would make the routine circumambulation (the tradition is still followed in all three major religions of India, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain) around the

platform which held in its centre the relics, and which supported the gigantic stupa. While circumambulating they would have passed the visual gallery of seated Buddhas in the niches in the platform walls, before entering the stupa from the centre of the west side. Inside there was a group of three small shrines most likely containing images of the Buddha as indicated by the presence of elevated rectangular pedestals in the centre of each square shrine. The only remnant from these small rooms is a large terracotta bas-relief of a standing man about 76 cm tall, which was found leaning against the north wall of the central shrine. The image, in all probability, represents the donor disciple, the only secular image found so far (see Pal, figure 10).

The roofs of the shrines were wagon-vaulted, with corbelling brick patterns (a tradition that prevailed in the region even during the Indus period). On either side of this group of shrines, a pair of staircases led up towards the west, to the platform above, as if for *pradakshina* around the circular tower (figure 6).

The square platform

The highly embellished square platform of the stupa was about 6 metres above the ground and nearly 18 metres square excluding the *pancharatha* (five projections) at the middle of the west face (figure 5). The walls on either side of the entrance in the west face of the stupa, above the moulded base, were divided into four bays. The corner bays were larger and possibly once contained blind-latticed windows within frames. The other two bays on either side of the entrance were each decorated with a panel containing a smaller image of a seated Buddha in a frame of peculiar design (see Pal, figure 9).

Like the west face, the other three faces above the base were also decorated, with the space above the mouldings on each side divided into five bays by pilasters. The three central niches of each had a terracotta image of seated Buddha in meditation, while the corner niches had rectangular blind-latticed windows. The lowest recess in the mouldings depicts a variety of motifs in the form of square panels, interrupted by a set of four petals.

Cylindrical tower

The great tower (missing) of the stupa was once highly embellished with one or more bands of pilasters, with image niches between them, and numerous string belts of decorative motifs and mouldings of sculptural bricks (figure 7). The presence of a large number of fragmentary moulded and ornamental bricks at the site indicates its close similarity to the stupas (towers) of Thul-Mir-Rukal, near Moro, Deparghangro near Brahmanabad, Sudheranjodaro near Tando Muhammad Khan, and the one near Jerruk.

The grandeur of the Mirpurkhas stupa tower (now missing), nearly 18 metres tall excluding the *harmika* and umbrella, could be compared with the Amaravati stupa in southern India as well as the highly embellished tower of Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath in northern India. The tower, with *harmika* above, was possibly crowned by a wooden erection in the shape of a great triple umbrella.

Conclusion

It is interesting to note that the stupas in Sindh, the Mahastupa at Devnimori (in Gujarat), and the later stupas in Bihar and Bangladesh followed the Gandharan tradition of square terraced platform supporting a spherical dome, a tradition which evolved during the Kushan period (1st–2nd century CE). But the possible date of the original establishment of Mirpurkhas has remained unresolved in the absence of inscriptions and other literary evidence. From the architectural design and ornamentation point of view one can assume that the reconstructed stupa at Mirpurkhas

seems to have been closer to the Devnimori stupa (late 4th–5th century CE) in western India. Both stupas indicate their close affinity with the stylistic tradition that prevailed in Gandhara during the 2nd–5th centuries CE.

The tradition of reconstruction and renovation of stupas was a well-known Buddhist convention. They would renovate or encase a stupa within a larger envelope, such act being considered one of great merit. Almost all the important stupas, in the Gandhara and Sindh regions, and at other sites in India, followed such conventions.

In conclusion, we may reiterate that the original sun-dried brick structure of the Mirpurkhas stupa probably belonged to the earliest period, and underwent major changes during the 4th–5th centuries CE as is apparent from the presence of a large number of curved and ornamental bricks of that period. The normal size of the bricks is 17 x 10 x 3 inches (c. 42.5 x 25 x 7.5 cm), which is again close to that of the bricks of Gupta shrines such as those at Bhitargaon, Ter, and Devnimori.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FIGURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All images, except figure 2, courtesy of the Trustees of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

NOTES

1. *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World* (translated by Samuel Beal), Vol. 1, Oriental Books, Delhi, repr. 1969, p. 272.

2. H. Cousens, *Buddhist Stupa at Mirpur-Khas, Sind*, Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1909–10, p. 80.

3. Ibid, p. 87.

4. *Journal of the Mahabodhi Society*, Vol. 42, No. 4, April 1934, pp. 186–87.

5. Nalinaksha Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Indological Book House, Varanasi, 1977, pp. 194, 195, 303.

6. Kalpana Desai, *Jewels on the Crescent*, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, 2002, p. 228.

1

General view of the site of Debal.
Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.

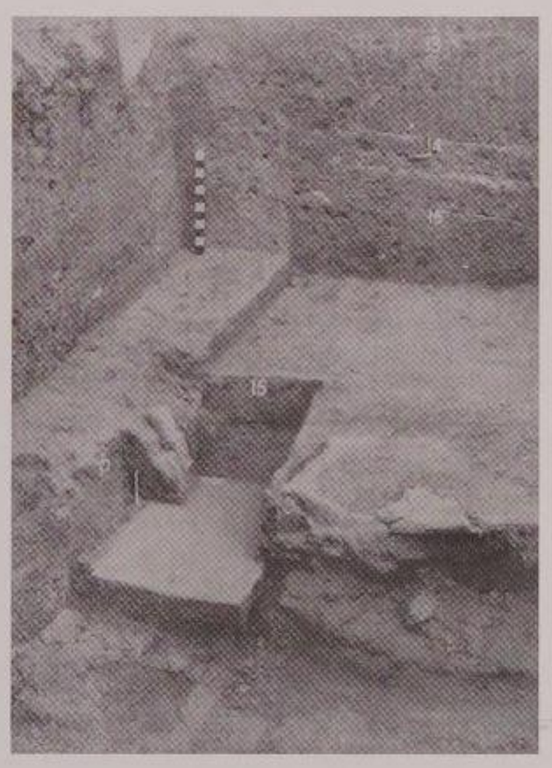
The Great Shiva Temple at Debal

Ibrahim Shah

The city of Debal,[1] now identified with the ruins of Banbhore,[2] was an important and fortified maritime trade centre in early medieval times (figure 1). A number of temples were built here during the reign of Chach – the founder of the Chach dynasty (652–712 CE) of Sindh, now a province of Pakistan.[3] These temples were scattered over the city. Here we are concerned with the one generally called the great Shiva temple.

The presence of Shiva lingas carved out of pale sandstone reported in situ and as stray finds in ancient Banbhore is an indicator to the existence of a strong Shiva cult and its popularity.[4] Obviously there must have been a great demand for the construction of temples to meet the religious needs of the faithful. Excavations of the site (1958–65)[5] have yielded remains of at least two Shiva temples – one each in the western (figure 2) and central sector. In the former case, Dr F.A. Khan discovered a Shiva linga fixed in a *yonipitha* (pedestal with the sexual emblem of Devi), which is now on display in the Archaeological Museum at Banbhore,[6] besides one more lying on the floor (figures 3–5). Lohuizen-de Leeuw identified the place with some probability with the grand temple of Debal.[7]

Dr F.A. Khan also reports "a number of large monolithic" Shiva lingas from other parts of the site which, in addition to many carved architectural members (figure 6), were re-used, in the lowest tread of the flight of steps of all the three entrances of the mosque built upon this site.[8] Of them, two detached Shiva lingas (figures 7 and 8) are now in the reserve collection of the Banbhore Museum.[9] But the huge tripartite linga reported by Dr F.A. Khan[10] could not be found there during my visit to the museum in February 2003.



2

Excavations in the temple area, western sector, Banbhore. From *Banbhore* by Dr F.A. Khan, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1976.

3

Votive Shiva linga in situ, Banbhore. From *Banbhore* by Dr F.A. Khan, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1976.

4

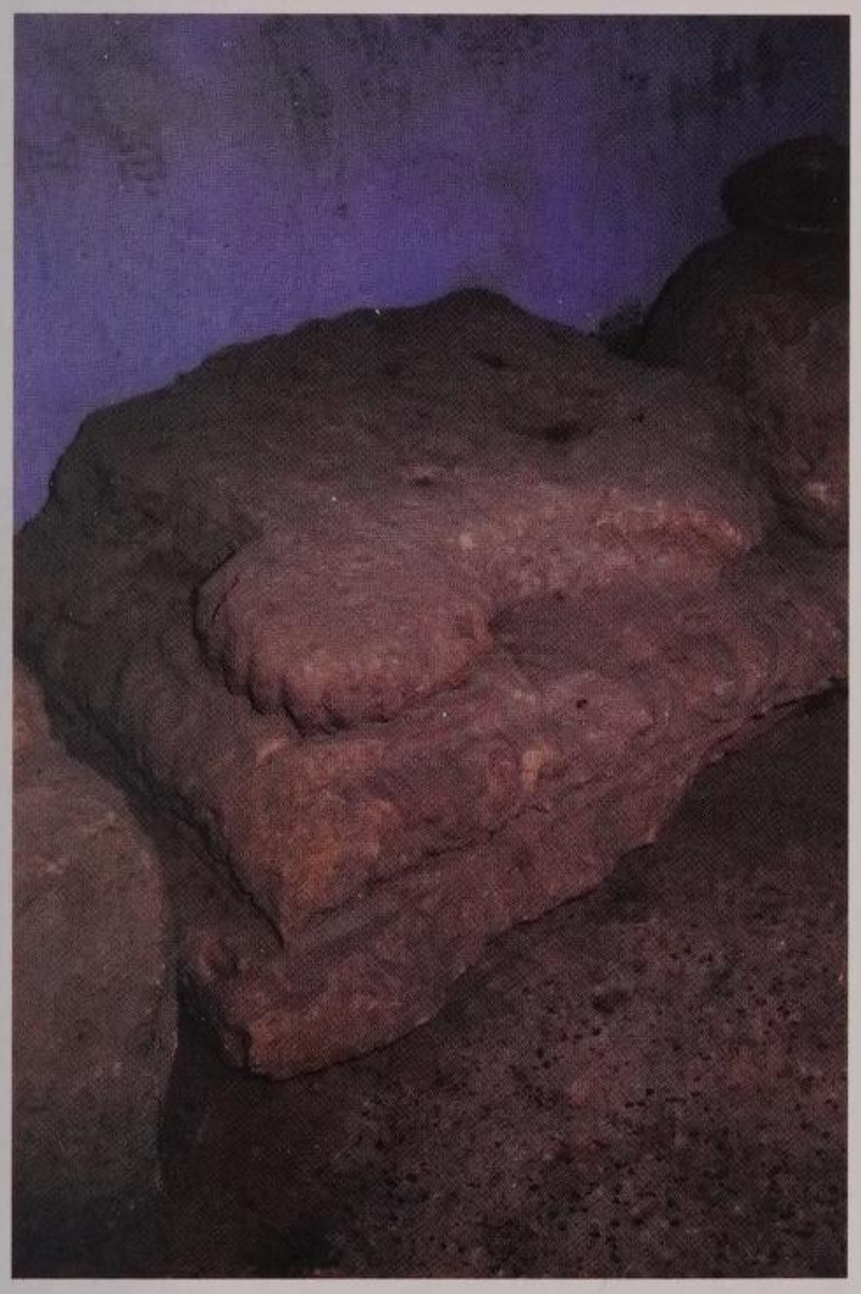
Votive Shiva linga now on display in the Archaeological Museum, Banbhore. Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.

Ishtiaq Khan, who in 2002 re-analysed the grand mosque of Banbhore in the light of historical, stratigraphical, and archaeological data retrieved from the site, suggests that this mosque does not appear to be the one built by Muhammad bin Qasim at the time of his conquest in 712 CE. Most important from the archaeological point of view are the remains of the grand mosque in the central sector of the site. Here excavations revealed four building phases. The first phase, Ishtiaq Khan suggests,[11] represents the original temple that remained in use till its destruction in 712. Badly damaged during the war, the temple lay in ruins for a century or so till Anbisa bin Ishaq, the newly appointed governor of Sindh by the Abbasid caliph Mustasim Billah (833–842 CE), who found the temple in a dilapidated condition, ordered mass reconstruction of the whole city. Anbisa pulled down the upper part of the temple and converted its lower part into a prison,[12] which marks its second building phase. A number of dressed and carved stone blocks (figure 9) extracted from this temple were re-used for repairing other buildings in the city.[13] But before completing its conversion into a prison, Anbisa was deposed and the task was taken up by Harun bin Muhammad, his successor, who completed the remaining work before his murder in 854.[14] After the earthquake of 894, the city buildings were reconstructed. This marks the third building phase at the site. Prince Muhammad bin Abdullah of the Habbarid dynasty of Sindh converted this structure into a mosque in 906. This building survived until the city turned into ruins during its last building phase sometime in the 13th century.[15]

Unfortunately the actual ground plan and other architectural details of this once imposing Shiva temple could not be brought to light. Nevertheless, it seems certain that the place marks the site of the temple with the fall of whose standard the entire city fell

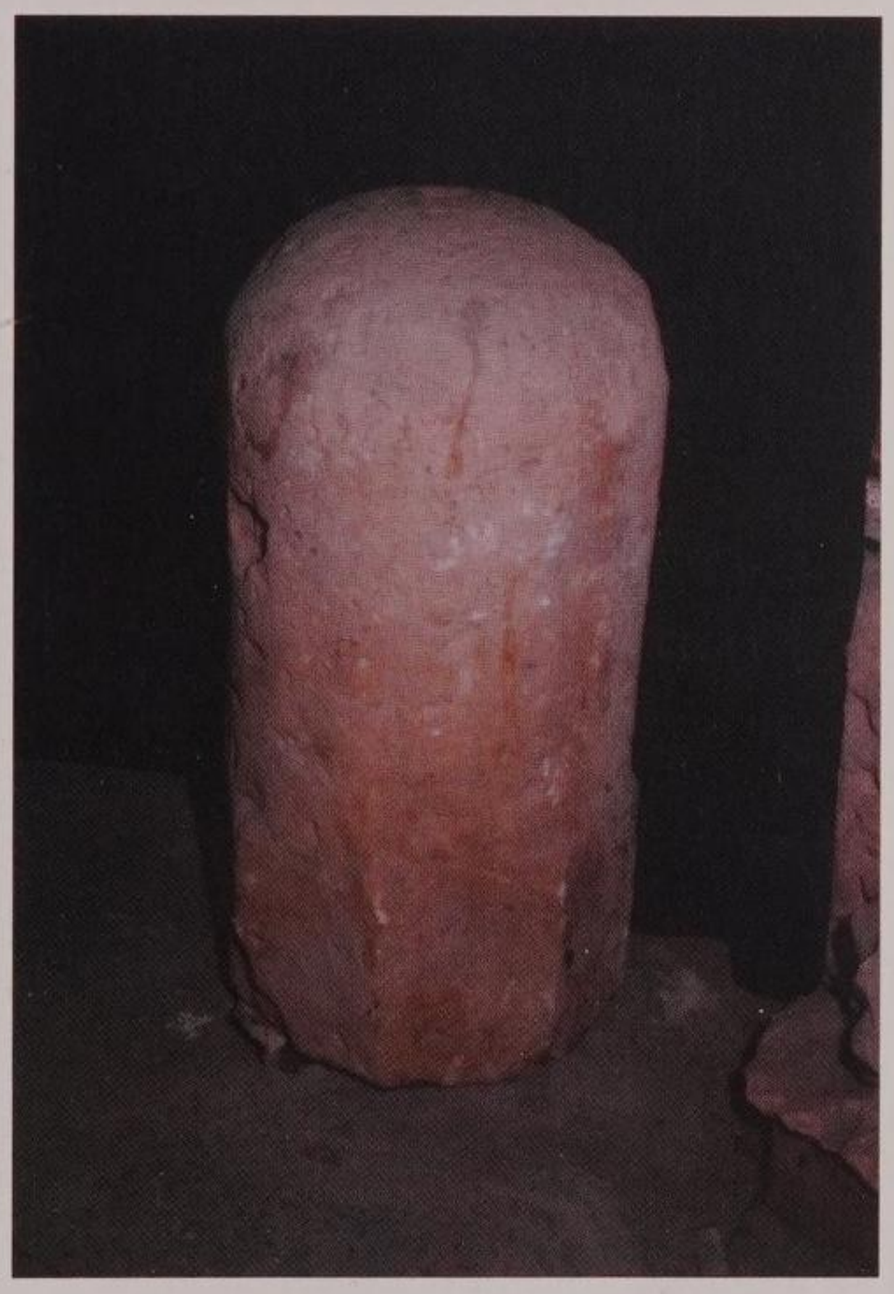
5

Another view of the *yonipitha* in figure 4. Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.



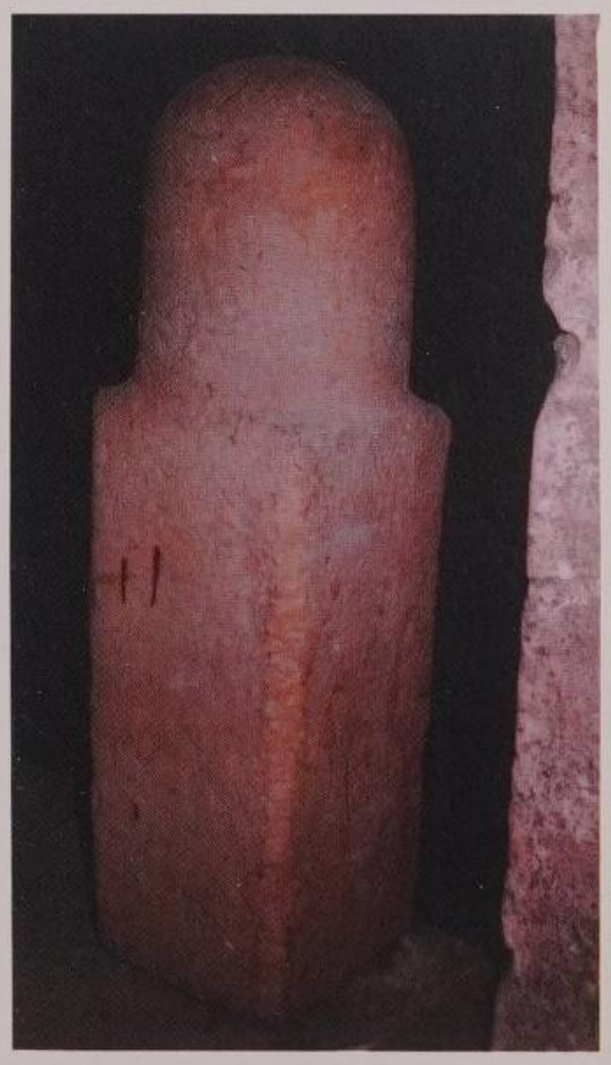
6

An *amalaka* from the temple area of Banbhore. Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.



7

Detached Shiva linga (of octagonal-round shape) from the reserve collection of the Archaeological Museum, Banbhore. Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.



8

Another detached Shiva linga, in square-round shape in the Archaeological Museum, Banbhore. Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.

9
Carved figures in pale sandstone extracted from the temple. Photograph: Ibrahim Shah.

to the invader. Xuanzang's[16] inventory of 30 Deva temples in Sindh must have included the one under review.[17]

Lacking sufficient architectural evidence at hand to reconstruct the shape and form of this temple, we depend upon textual data preserved in the contemporary and near contemporary historical sources. From these literary references we learn that the temple had a single doorway guarded by two *dvarapala*s (or doorkeepers), who were murdered by the invading soldiers to obtain easy access into the temple interior.[18] The edifice rose to a height of about 40 metres surmounted by a *shikhara* of equal height.[19] From the lofty *shikhara* fluttered a silken flag with four streamers.[20] The colour of the temple standard is variously recorded, green or red.[21] We find two different terms used for the high superstructure of the temple in the sources available to us: *gumbad* (or dome) and *minarah* (or tower). From contextual evidence it appears that the early Arab historians could not translate the Sanskrit term *shikhara* into Arabic and contented themselves with the commonly used terms *gumbad* and *minarah* signifying the high superstructure of the temple (just as they used *bud*, *budkhanah*, and *butkhanah* for temple in general).

The Hindu temple had by now evolved into the Nagara style of *shikhara* as seen in the Gupta-period examples of north and northwest India.[22] Stylistic currents of Gupta art and architecture can be traced at sites like Murti, Rokri, Chakwal, the Salt Range, the Kafir Kot and Bilot, Tharparkar, Mirpurkhas, etc.[23]

Conclusion

Pakistan has a rich heritage of three major religious systems of the subcontinent – Brahmanic Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Hindu art and architecture in Pakistan needs the serious consideration of researchers as it has remained an almost barren field for a long time, for one reason or another.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Fazal Dad Kakar, Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, for granting me permission to publish/reproduce photographs of stone sculptures now housed in the Archaeological Museum, Banbhore (Sindh). My sincere thanks are also due to Dr Pratapaditya Pal for his moral and material support in my academic pursuits.

NOTES

1 Literally *devala*, from *devalaya*, which means the "abode of god". A temple is usually referred to as *devalaya, devayatana, devatayatana, devagriha, devakula, devabhavanam,* etc. (E.W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, Delhi, 1968, p. 70; R. Nath, *The Art of Khajuraho*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 15), all signifying the "abode of god". It renders the microscopic image of the universe animated by the presence of the *murti*, idol, like the Buddhist stupa; see B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India (Buddhist, Hindu, Jain)*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1953 (reprint 1971), p. 49. Some places with the name Dewal (correctly Devala), Dewal Sharif, and Devalay (correctly Devalaya as mentioned above) do exist in northwest Pakistan. S.M. Ashfaque ("The Grand Mosque of Banbhore", *Pakistan Archaeology* No. 6, Karachi, 1969, p. 185) refers to a letter from Jairamdas Daulatram, dated August 5, 1962 addressed to Dr F.A. Khan. Daulatram rejects the identification of Debal with Banbhore. He asserts that this is the name of the famous temple or *devalaya* (cf. Nath, op. cit.) in that town whose fame overshadowed its identity.

2 M.A. Ghafur, "Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore, the Site of Daybul", *Pakistan Archaeology* No. 3, Karachi, 1966, pp. 76, 81; Ashfaque, op. cit., p. 185; see also A. Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, Vol. I, The Buddhist Period, Delhi, 1871 (reprint 1990), pp. 247–54.

3 N.A. Baloch, "The Early Establishment of Muslim Power in Al-Sindh and Al-Hind", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. XLVII, No. 4, Karachi, 1999, p. 35.

4 F.A. Khan, "Excavations at Banbhore", *Pakistan Archaeology* No. 1, Karachi, 1964, p. 53, pls. XVI-B, XVII-A; "Excavations: Banbhore", *Pakistan Archaeology* No. 5, Karachi, 1968, pp. 183–84; *Architecture and Art Treasures in Pakistan: Prehistoric, Protohistoric, Buddhist and Hindu Periods*, Karachi, 1969, p. 139; "Debal and Mansura: The Historic Cities of the Early Islamic Period", *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture*, Vol. II, No. 1, Islamabad, 1981, p. 108; and Ghafur, op. cit., pp. 66, 74.

5 F.A. Khan, *Banbhore: A Preliminary Report on the Recent Archaeological Excavations at Banbhore*, Karachi, 4th edition 1976 (1st edition 1960), p. 9.

6 Ibid., pp. 8, 15; Khan, 1969, op. cit., p. 147.

7 J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, "The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sind", *South Asian Archaeology 1975*, Leiden, 1979, p. 171; cf. M. Ishtiaq Khan, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore: A Reappraisal", *Ancient Pakistan*, Vol. XV, Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, 2002, p. 3.

8 Khan, 1976, op. cit., pp. 14, 26–27; Khan, 1964, op. cit., pls. XVII-A and B; Khan, 1968, op. cit., pl. LXIX-b; Ishtiaq Khan, op. cit., p. 1; Ashfaque, op. cit., p. 198, pl. XXVI-b.

9 I. Shah, "A Short Survey of *Shivalingas* in the Pakistani Collections", in A. Banerji and D. Desai (eds.), *Studies on Art, Archaeology and Indology (Dr Shri Krishna Deva Commemoration Volume)*, New Delhi, 2007a, in press; "The Temples of the Salt Range, Kafir Kot and Bilot: Their Local Stylistic Origins and Extra-local Influences", *Ancient Sindh*, Vol. 9, Department of Archaeology, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur (Sindh), 2008, in press.

10 Khan, 1976, op. cit., p. 27; 1964, op. cit., pl. XVII-A; cf. Ashfaque, op. cit., pp. 198–99.

11 Ishtiaq Khan, op. cit., pp. 4–6.

12 Ahmad bin Yahya bin Jabir al-Shahir Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Baldan*, Urdu trans. Abu al-Khair Maududi, 2 vols., Karachi, 3rd edition, 1986, p. 620.

13 Khan, 1968, op. cit., pl. LXIX-b.

14. Ibid.

15 Ishtiaq Khan, op. cit., pp. 5–6; cf. Khan, 1976, op, cit., p. 28.

16 S. Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 2 vols., English trans., Delhi-Varanasi-Patna, 1884 (reprint 1981), Vol. II, p. 272.

17 The existence of Vaishnava adherents and a temple of their presiding deity at the site of Debal (or Banbhore) cannot be ignored in light of the discovery of a fragmentary image of Vishnu holding what appears to be a *shankha* or conch in one of his left hands (Khan, 1976, op. cit., p. 16, fig. 4; Lohuizen-de Leeuw, op. cit., p. 171, pl. 88), and two separate *shankhas*, perhaps originally used as cult objects, now on display in the Banbhore Museum (personal visit on February 23, 2003).

18 Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, *The Chachnamah: An Ancient History of Sind*, English trans., Lahore, 1900 (reprint 1985), p. 84.

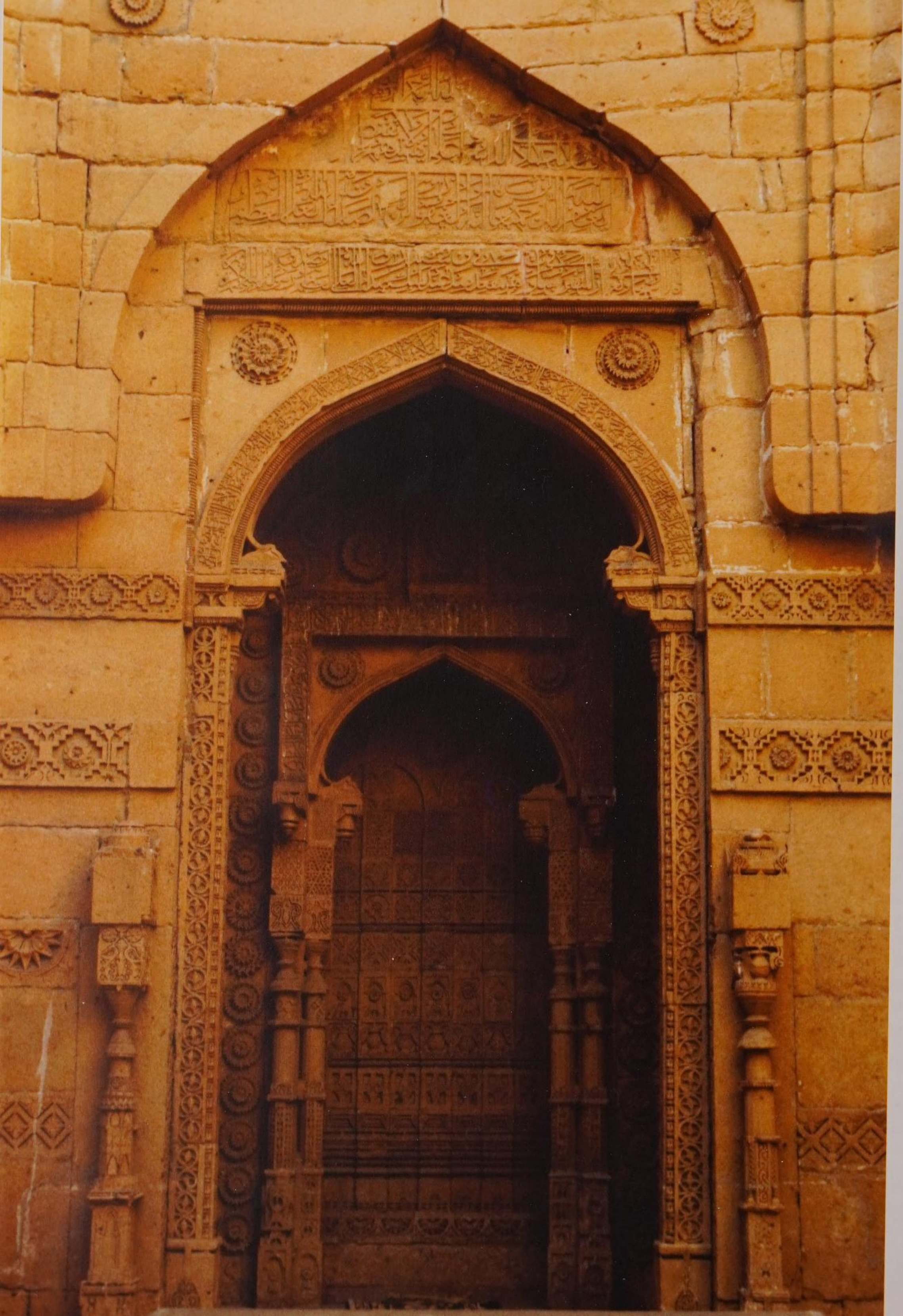
19 N.A. Baloch, *Fathnamah-i Sind: Being the Original Record of the Arab Conquest of Sind (712–15 AD)*, Islamabad, 1983, p. 76; Mir 'Ali Sher Qani', *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, Urdu trans. Akhtar Rizvi, annotated by Makhdum Amir Ahmad and Dr Nabi Bakhsh Khan Baloch, Jamshoro/Karachi, 2nd edition 2002 (1st edition 1959), p. 37; H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson (eds.), *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, Lahore, 2nd edition 1979 (1st edition 1976), Vol. I, p. 505, Appendix, on the authority of the manuscript of *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, p. 10, also gives the same figures.

20 Qani', op. cit., p. 37; cf. Lohuizen-de Leeuw, op. cit., p. 171.

21 Green: Baloch, 1983, op. cit., p. 76; Lohuizen-de Leeuw, op. cit., p. 171. Red: Baladhuri, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 619; cf. Elliot and Dowson, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 120.

22 Cf. Ghafur, op. cit., pp. 74–75.

23 M.A. Stein, *Archaeological Reconnaissances in North-western India and South-eastern Iran*, London, 1937, pp. 52–56, pls. 20, 21; M. Dawani, "Hindu Temple Architecture and the Temples of Sindh", in K.K. Mumtaz and S. Akbar (eds.), *Temples of Koh-e Jud & Thar*, Lahore, 1989; I. Shah, "Hindu Art in Pakistan: A Study Based on Museum Collections" (Ph.D. dissertation, unpublished), Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar (Pakistan), 2007b, chapter on "Evolution of the Hindu Temple".



Of Merchants, Courtiers, and Saints: The Islamic Architecture of Sindh

Alka Patel

1 *opposite*
Tomb of Jam Nizam al-Din, Makli Hill, Thatta, Sindh, mihrab.

Before we analyse or discuss the development of Islamic architecture in Sindh we need to establish the historical context and milieu in which the architecture was created. After all, it was in Sindh that Islam established its first foothold on the subcontinent as early as or even before the 8th century.

Sindh called the attention of 8th- through 10th-century Arab geographers even though it occupied the peripheries of the world known to them. In these geographers' descriptions, "Sindh" referred to the western half of the land of al-Hind wa-l-Sindh, the mighty bloc radiating to the east and west from the banks of the Indus river, the stuff of legend since the days of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE). Despite its distance from Damascus and Baghdad, the magnificent capitals of the Islamic dynasties of the Umayyads (c. 661–750 CE) and the Abbasids (c. 750–1258), Sindh fired the imaginations of laypeople and rulers alike in these empires. The early geographers and other travellers reported that Sindh was a land not only of strange customs and animals, but also of opulent, petty rulers worshipping in idol-temples and commanding fantastic wealth.[1]

According to the *Chachnama*, thought to be a later redaction of an eyewitness account of the 8th-century Arab conquest of Sindh, the region was ruled by the Rai dynasty, probably of Hindu affiliation, during the late 600s and early 700s or the first century of the Hijra. Sindh's conquest by the Arabs was apparently precipitated by its rather capricious king Dahir, reigning during the first decade of the 8th century. During his rule, Muslim pilgrims and others travelling by sea from Sarandib (Sri Lanka) were captured by pirates and held for ransom at the Sindhi port of Debal, probably modern Banbhore,[2] where the Indus met the Arabian Sea. The Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (r. 685–705) and his regional governors made repeated requests to Dahir for intercession, while the travellers' own pleas also reached him. Nevertheless, Dahir refused to come to the aid of the captives, claiming powerlessness against the pirates who frequently disrupted the seagoing traffic along the coasts of his kingdom.

Dahir's disregard for the Umayyad caliph, his will, and his subjects did not go unanswered. The *Chachnama* goes on to describe a punitive expedition against the Rai ruler, planned and provisioned by the Umayyad governor of Iraq, Yusuf ibn Hajjaj. The expedition was successfully carried out by his nephew and son-in-law Muhammad ibn Qasim, who in later historical and other literary genres came to embody not only the Islamic conquest of Sindh, but also the entrance of Islam into the entire Indian subcontinent.[3]

For our purposes, the *Chachnama* suggests that Dahir's laxity cost him his kingdom: in 711–12 Sindh was politically integrated into the rapidly growing territories of the Umayyads and, religio-culturally, it was welcomed into the fold of Islam. By 715, Muhammad ibn Qasim had brought all of Sindh under direct Umayyad control, his dominion stretching from the Sindhi coast, commanded by the famous city of Debal-Banbhore, to Multan, now in West Punjab. The erstwhile Rai capitals of Brahmanabad (late Mansurah) and Aror fell to Muhammad's forces without prolonged resistance. In turn, the military commander was ordered by his superior Hajjaj to adopt a policy of leniency toward his new subjects, especially the "commonfolk, traders and artisans".[4]

The literary conventions governing medieval Arabic geographical and historical writing rendered the early descriptions of Sindh and its rulers, as well as the accounts of the Umayyads' conquest of the region, much less nuanced than demanded by modern-day political correctness, and less informative than required by scholarship. Nevertheless, these texts serve as clues in deciphering the factors that made Sindh an important territorial gain for the Umayyads and, despite being half a continent away from the central Islamic lands, brought about a great flowering of Islamic architecture, art, and culture in the region throughout the next millennium.

The actual reasons for the Arab-Umayyad campaign in Sindh become clear when we examine the larger geo-political realities of the early 8th century. Throughout the previous 100 years, the Arabs and various Central Asian powers had been competing to monopolize the land routes linking China to West Asia and beyond. In the early 700s, the Umayyads deputed another well known military commander, Qutaiba ibn Muslim, to gain control of the legendary "Silk Routes". The consequent disturbances there diverted the traffic of merchants and merchandise to maritime travel via Sri Lanka, as alluded to in the *Chachnama* story above. Sindh with its strategic coastline on the Arabian Sea and the navigability of the Indus far northward all the way to the valleys of Kashmir, and Central Asia with its extensive overland links connecting the eastern and western extremes of the vast continent, would together create a formidable trade empire and aid in the spread of Islam to the ends of Asia.[5]

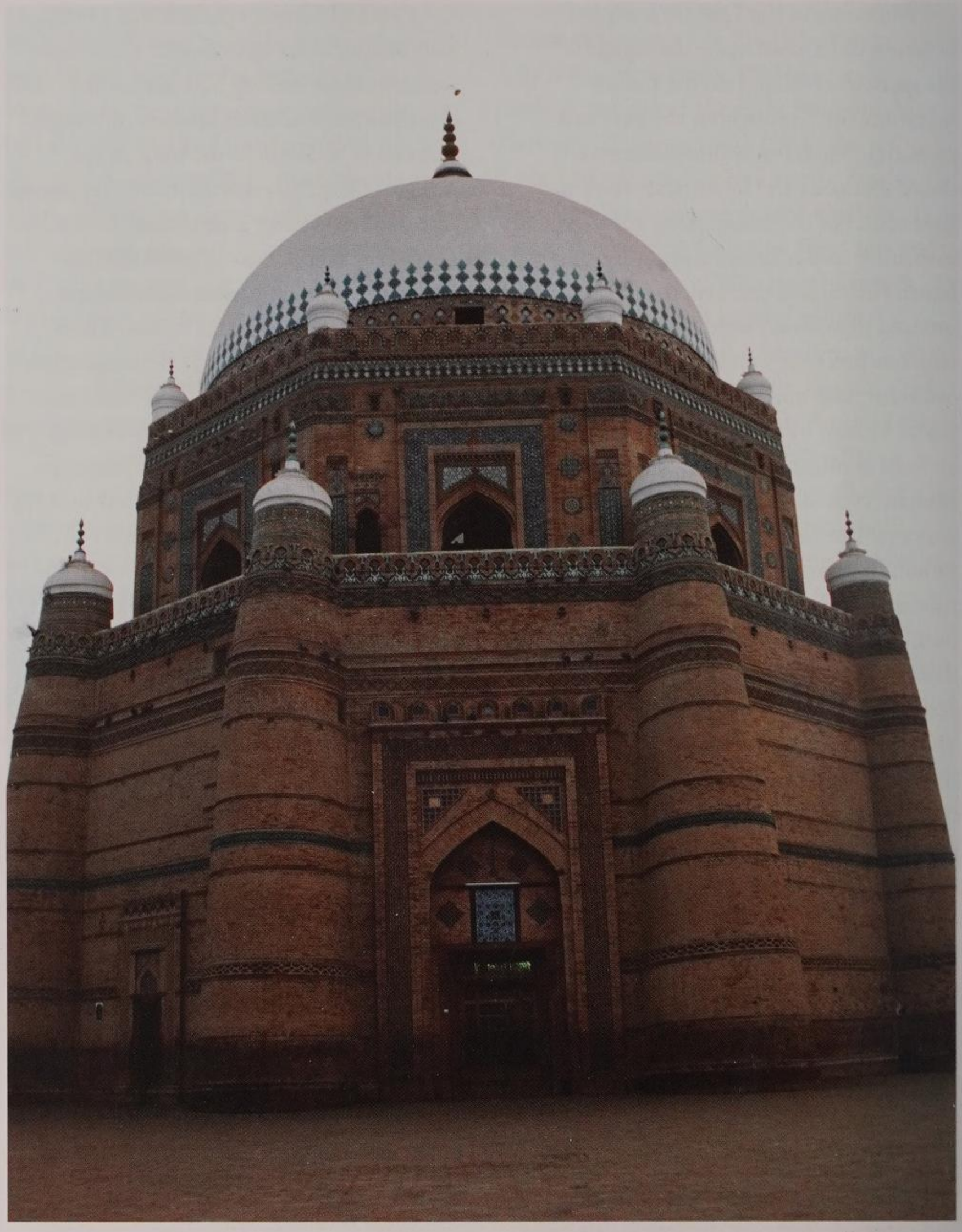
We may infer that the *Chachnama* and other accounts of the great wealth of the Rai dynasty of Sindh actually referred to the trade networks and commercial profits the region represented. Dahir's supposed weakness in confronting the pirates along his coasts and his cowardice in rescuing their captives stood for his overall inability or unwillingness to tap into these virtually infinite riches. Moreover, the *Chachnama*'s repeated mention of Muhammad ibn Qasim's leniency toward the Sindhis – he even granted them protected or *dhimmi* status as People of the Book – indicates that the Umayyads' principal post-conquest aim in Sindh was the preservation of institutions and infrastructure to ensure continuity of commerce.[6] Clearly, Dahir's lack of vision regarding his own kingdom was more than amply compensated for by the Umayyads' and their successors' commercial savvy and material ambition.

Muhammad ibn Qasim's conquest of Sindh did indeed make the region the gateway of Islam into the Indian subcontinent. Throughout the next two centuries, Sindh's convenient access to the Arabian Sea and its intricate river and land routes of communication attracted mercantile and religious groups from Egypt, North Africa, and the Yemen. Some of these intrepid newcomers were Isma'ilis, whose religious practices were considered far from orthodox, and unacceptable to mainstream Islam. In fact, by the early 10th century, an Isma'ili mission was well entrenched at Multan, even allowing the city's famous Surya temple to remain under worship by Hindu pilgrims coming from all over the subcontinent. Although most of the Isma'ili immigrants came to Sindh for commerce, their religious leaders carried out missionary activity in Sindh and neighbouring Gujarat. Their proselytization ultimately invited the wrath of the infamous sultan Mahmud (r. 999–1030) of Ghazna, who annexed northern Sindh to his territories farther west supposedly in order to stamp out the Isma'ili heterodoxy.[7]

With this historical context in mind, we can understand the factors directing the unique formulation of Sindh's Islamic architecture. Between the early 8th and 18th centuries, Islamic building traditions from North Africa, West Asia, and Central Asia came to Sindh with the numerous groups of merchants, religious figures, scholars, and others frequenting the region due to its economic importance in global trade and its cultural prominence in the Islamic world. During the first half of the 13th century, moreover, the Mongol invasions of Central and parts of West Asia further encouraged migrations of artisans, statesmen, and Sufi saints to the many prosperous sultanates of the subcontinent, including the court of Nasir al-Din Qubacha (r. 1206–28) at Uchh Sharif near Multan. Thatta in southern Sindh, the capital of the Sumeras (c. 1053–c. 1350) and Sammas (c. 1350–c. 1515), both Rajput clans converted to Islam, also attracted those seeking new homes after these disturbances. The establishment of various Sufi orders in Sindh in the wake of the Mongol campaigns was another determining factor in the region's architectural landscape.[8]

We must also bear in mind that the long-enduring, indigenous architectural and sculptural practices of northwestern India contributed equally to a recognizable Sindhi architectural idiom. The floral and linear motifs of the 5th- and 6th-century Buddhist terracottas from Mirpurkhas, for example, were influential on the baked-brick and even stone decoration of Sindh's Islamic buildings. Furthermore, the 7th- through 10th-century Hindu temples of the Indus delta, which incorporated some carved wood elements within their brick structures, were important precedents for the elevations and interiors of the tombs and mosques of Sindh. Finally, the 7th- through 17th-century stone-carving traditions of neighbouring Gujarat also exerted formative influences on Sindh's monumental architecture, especially from the 14th century onward.[9]

The Islamic architecture of Sindh dating to the 8th through 12th centuries survives only in excavated ruins. The mosques of Debal-Banbhore and Mansurah, both founded shortly after Muhammad ibn Qasim's 711–712 conquest of Sindh and in use through the early 14th century, followed Arab hypostyle plans of the Levant and Iraq. Although their main fabrics were of stone, their prayer areas were divided into aisles by wooden columns, the Mansurah mosque possibly having had an ornately carved teak dado as well. While these 8th-century buildings relied on central Islamic traditions, recent archaeological finds dating to the 9th–11th centuries in the Indus deltaic zone around Debal-Banbhore evince indigenous stone carving techniques and iconography.[10] Evidently, the architectural forms imported with the Islamic conquest were assimilated



2

Tomb of Shah Rukn al-Din Rukn-i Alam, Multan, West Punjab, c. 1330.

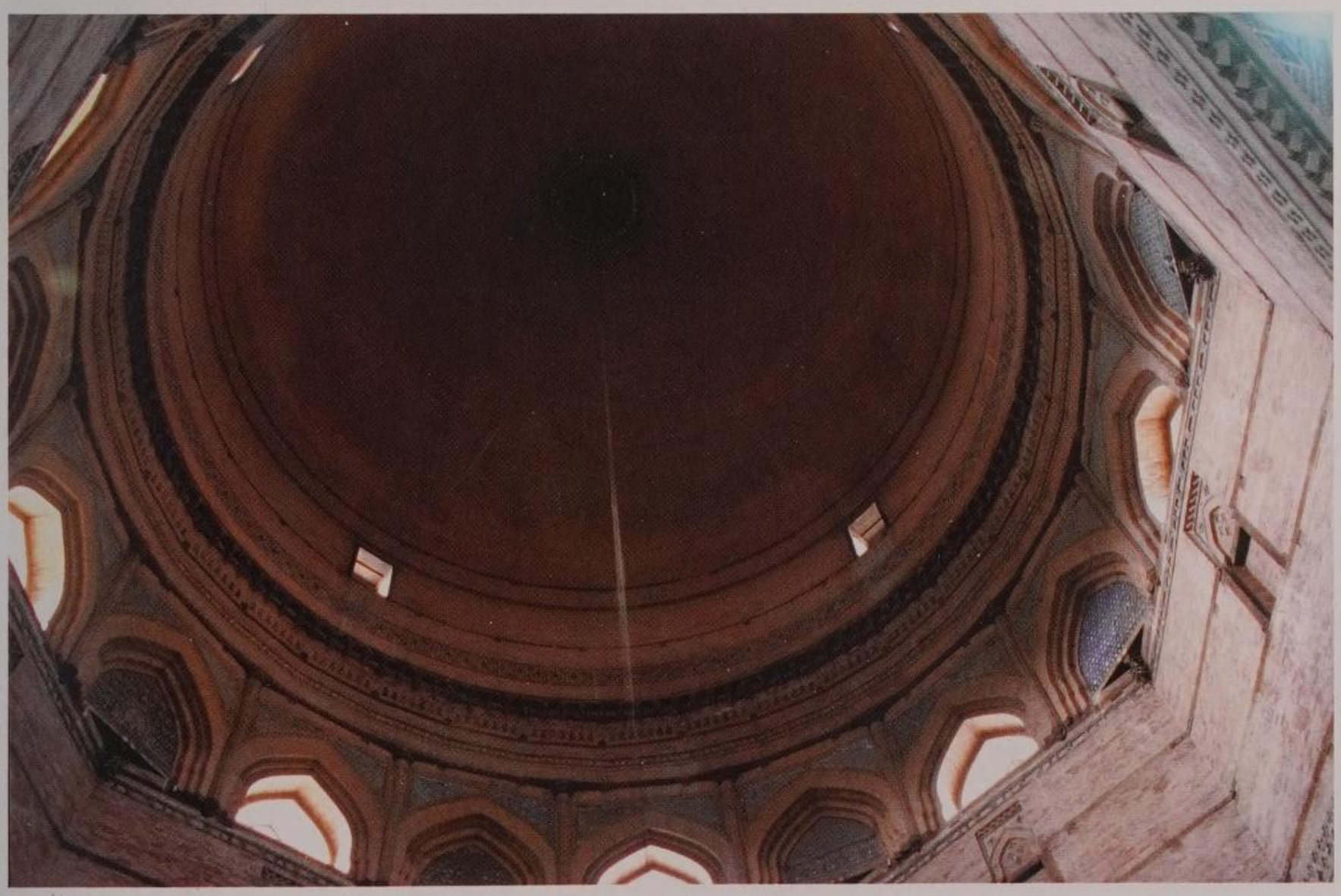
into local practice within a century of their transplantation to Sindh.

Monumental examples of Sindh's Islamic architecture survive only from the 13th century onward. As hinted above, the extensive activity of Sufi orders (*silsila*s) throughout Sindh and their ritual emphasis on *urs*, or the commemoration of their sheikhs' deaths, led to the predominance of funerary buildings or *dargah*s, often with attached mosques. The Suhrawardi, Qadiri, and Naqshbandi *silsila*s established themselves in prosperous commercial centres like Multan, Uchh Sharif, and Thatta, where merchants, pilgrims, and other travellers were sure to find lodging during their journeys.[11] Despite the prevalence of a commemorative *function* in the surviving buildings of Sindh from the later medieval period, we can nonetheless discern a palpable divergence in *style* between Upper Sindh, centred around Multan, and Lower Sindh,

dominated by Thatta. The buildings of Upper Sindh had great affinities with the domical brick constructions of Iran and Central Asia. The architecture of Lower Sindh, though not devoid of Iranian-Central Asian affinities, was more noteworthy for its lasting connections with the trabeate stone construction originating in neighbouring Gujarat.

The tomb of Shah Rukn al-Din Rukn-i Alam in Multan (c. 1330) (figures 2 and 3) represents the power of the Sufi orders and the importance of Iranian building traditions in Upper Sindh. Shah Rukn al-Din was the grandson of Baha al-Din Zakariya (d. 1267), the Suhrawardi leader from Iran who introduced the *silsila* not only to Sindh but to all of South Asia. Seemingly referring to the family's origins, Shah Rukn al-Din's tomb descends from the commemorative Islamic buildings that had found their apotheosis in the tomb of Uljeitu (c. 1300) in Tabriz, Iran.[12] The tomb is constructed of brick with glazed tile decoration running in horizontal bands across the three-storey exterior elevation. These bright blue tile courses were to become characteristic of the exteriors of the later medieval architecture of Sindh. At the tomb of Rukn al-Din, however, these decorative flourishes do little to conceal the hulking proportions of an essentially military aesthetic: the octagonal building is marked by engaged circular towers at each of the eight corners. The lofty interior (figure 3) is a domical space with a clerestory for light and ventilation, and glazed-tile punctuation of the dome's drum and its supporting walls.

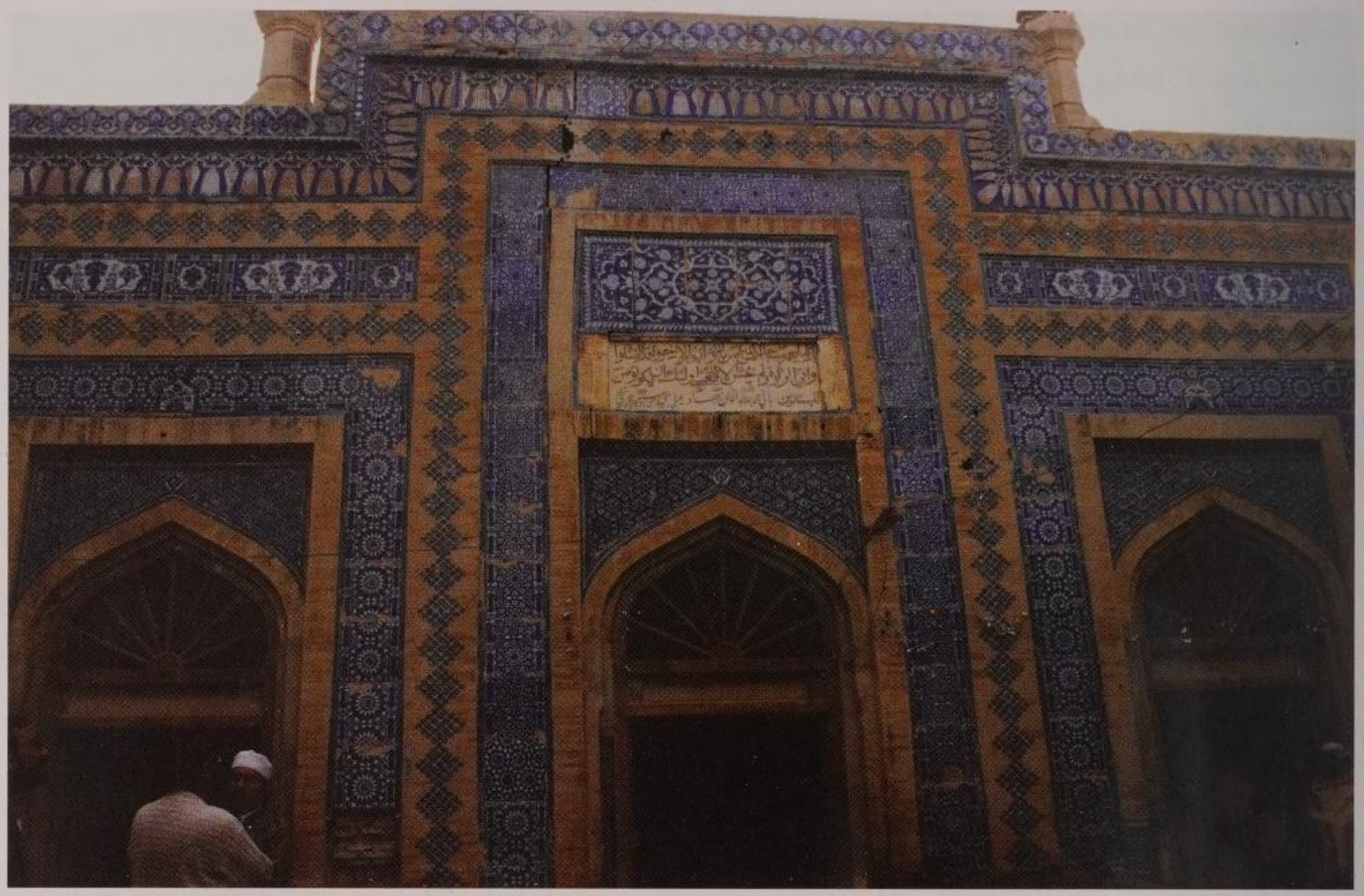
Other buildings of Upper Sindh, though dominated by architectural practices derived from Iran and Central Asia, also demonstrate the admixture of indigenous conventions, resulting in a localized interpretation of these imported traditions. At Uchh Sharif, the mosque within the tomb complex of Sheikh Sayyid Jalal Surkh-posh (figure 4) – an important figure in the establishment of the Suhrawardi order in the city – dates to the first half of the 14th century. Though constructed of baked brick, the building is not domical but block-like in form, its exterior replete with the bright blue tiles so characteristic of Sindh. Such rectangular structures show abundant use of intricately carved wood for their interior structural members, as seen in the early 14th-century



3
Tomb of Shah Rukn al-Din Rukn-i Alam, interior.

4

Mosque in the complex of Sheikh Sayyid Jalal Surkh-posh, Uchh Sharif, West Punjab, 14th century.



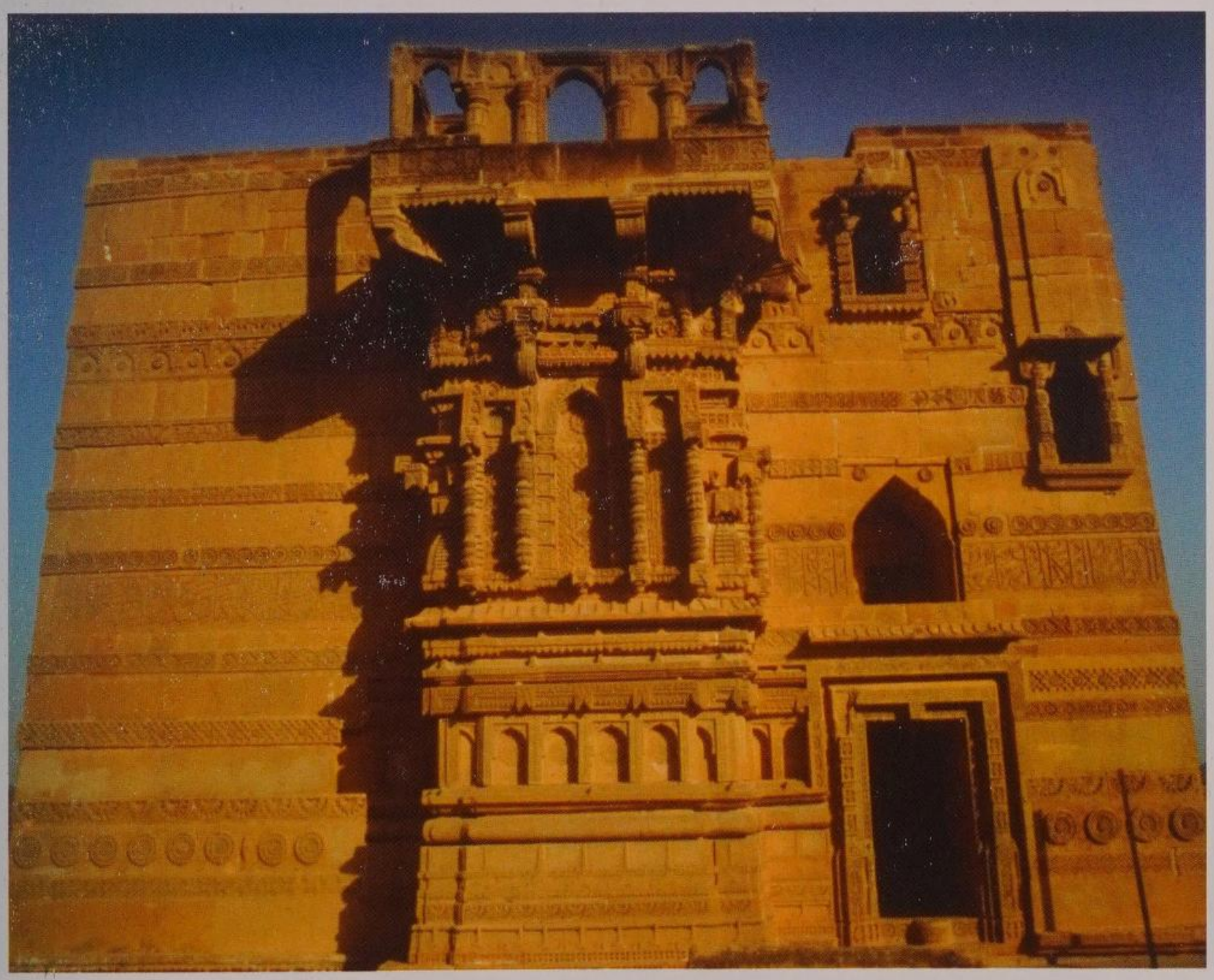
5

Tomb of Sadr al-Din or Rajan Qattal, Uchh Sharif, West Punjab, 14th century, interior.

tomb of Sadr al-Din or Rajan Qattal (figure 5), also at Uchh. The equal combination of brick and wood in these buildings hearkens to the early Hindu temples of the Indus delta, though by the later medieval period wood was even more freely used on the interiors and, at times, in brightly polychromatic form.

The city of Thatta was probably founded by the Sumeras, a clan of Rajput origin who were converted to Islam through Isma'ili proselytization. Due to the convergence there of overland routes criss-crossing the deserts of Sindh, Rajasthan, and the Rann of Kutch, the city commanded Lower Sindh commercially, culturally, and spiritually through the 18th century. Additionally, political-missionary bases of various Sufi orders in the city led to the establishment of nearby Makli Hill as the largest necropolis in South Asia. It is in the Makli tombs that we discern Lower Sindh's affinities with the predominantly trabeate stone-building practices coming from Gujarat.[13]

It can be argued that the epitome of Lower Sindh's stone-building traditions is the tomb of Jam Nizam al-Din (r. end 15th–early 16th century) (figures 1, 6, and 7), the most popular ruler of the Samma dynasty. The building is of local yellow limestone, its block-like appearance alleviated by a wide calligraphic band, carved floral and geometric friezes, and the heavily ornate mihrab projection on its western facade (figure 6). The interior (figure 7) is octagonal in plan, also decorated with horizontal friezes and possibly left open to the sky. The mihrab niche (figure 1) carved deep into the western wall, serves as the focal point of the building with its profuse incised and sculpted ornamentation. The abundant use of decorative motifs from the temple architecture of the Indus delta and Gujarat, including the auspicious half-lotus and duck friezes on the exterior and the lotus medallions and multi-sectioned pillarets flanking the interior mihrab, had led early scholars such as Henry Cousens to conclude



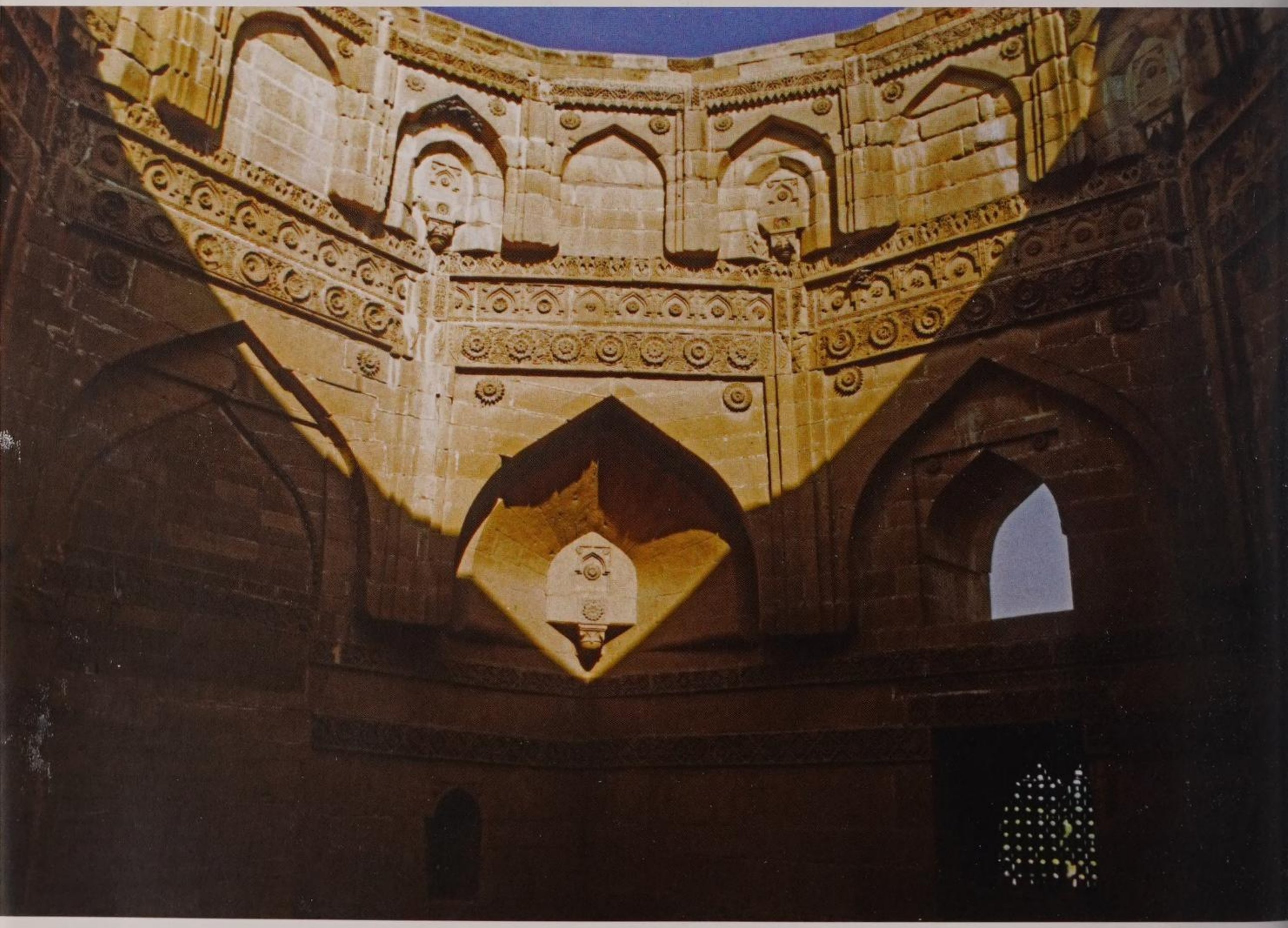
6
Tomb of Jam Nizam al-Din,
Makli Hill, Thatta, Sindh, 1509.

that the building was constructed of recycled Hindu temple fragments.[14] The scale of these elements, however, and their smooth integration into an overall iconographic programme indicate that the components were carved specifically for the building. Nonetheless, there is no denying the strong stylistic connection with the distinct stone-working traditions of Gujarat.

The local assimilation of the stone-carving styles imported from Gujarat is most evident in the many 17th-century *chhatris* and sarcophagi at nearby Chaukhandi (figure 8), another necropolis about 50 kilometres east of modern Karachi. Rather than the virtually three-dimensional treatment of stone in the Thatta tombs, Chaukhandi's shallow, at times incised, style of carving demonstrates that, within a century of the tomb of Jam Nizam al-Din, Lower Sindh's stone-workers had created a technique and style unique to the region. Moreover, the flat, plaque-like surface decorations of the Chaukhandi tombs are reminiscent of the terracotta reliefs from Mirpurkhas and the early Islamic architecture of the Indus valley.

The Chaukhandi tombs may also provide clues into Lower Sindh's syncretic religious beliefs: some sarcophagi here are decorated with detailed carvings of feminine jewellery (figure 9), an iconography that has been associated with the Sati stones of Rajasthan. It is possible, then, that some Rajput practices of the Sumeras

7
Tomb of Jam Nizam al-Din, Makli Hill, interior.



and Sammas, such as widow immolation, survived after their conversion to Islam, particularly since these conversions were facilitated by the more permissive (and therefore considered Islamically unorthodox) Isma'ili missionaries.[15]

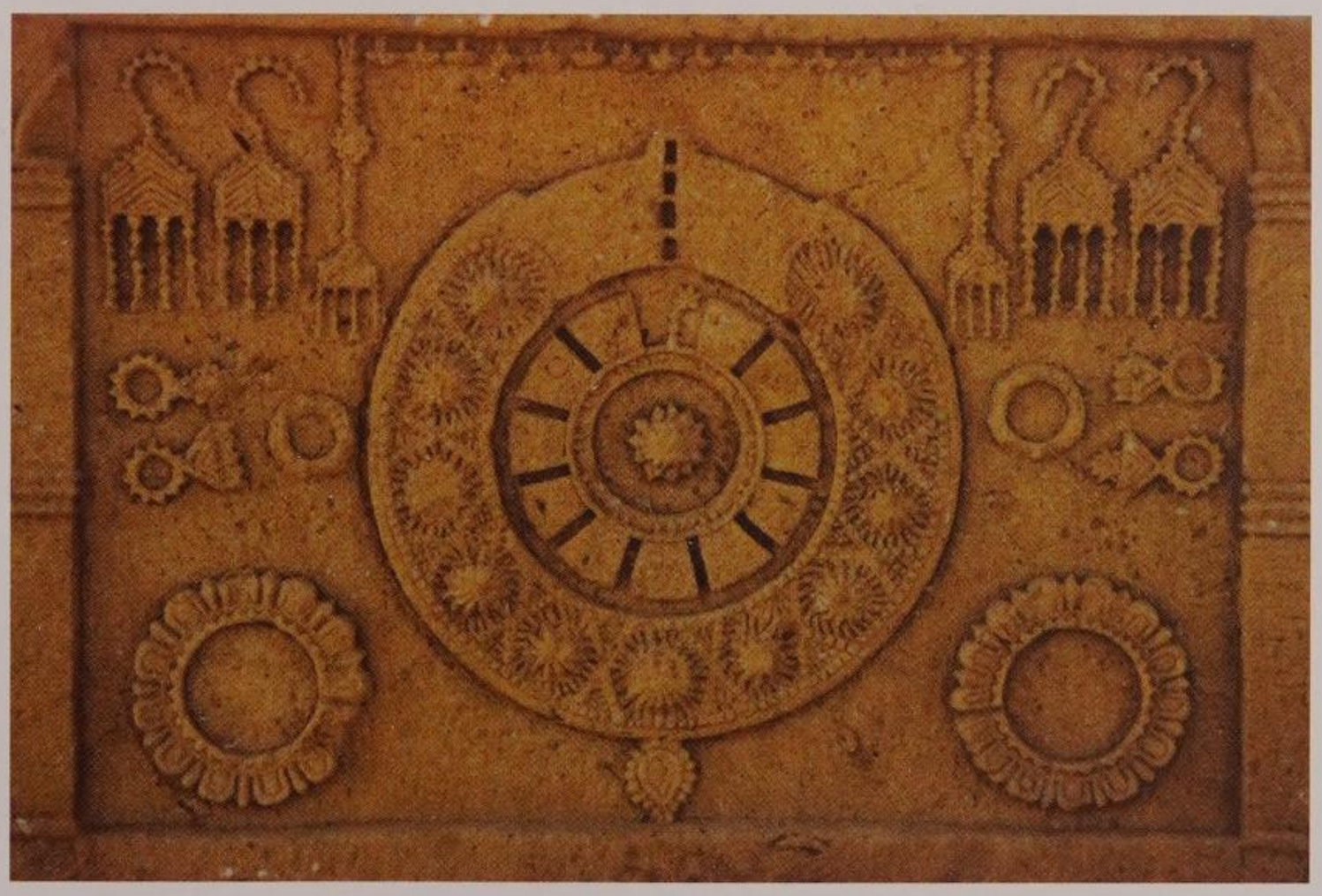
Thatta and Lower Sindh were by no means impervious to Iranian and Central Asian traditions, particularly those of 15th- and early 16th-century Timurid architecture. The appearance of these building traditions in Lower Sindh is explained by the presence here throughout the 16th century of the Turkic-Mongol Arghuns (1520–54) and their senior branch the Tarkhans (1554–91). The Arghuns had been governors of Kandahar, southeastern Afghanistan, during the reign of the Timurid sultan Husain Baiqara (r. 1469–70 and 1470–1506), himself a great patron of the arts. With the growing power of the Safavids (1501–1722) of Iran, however, minor clans such as the

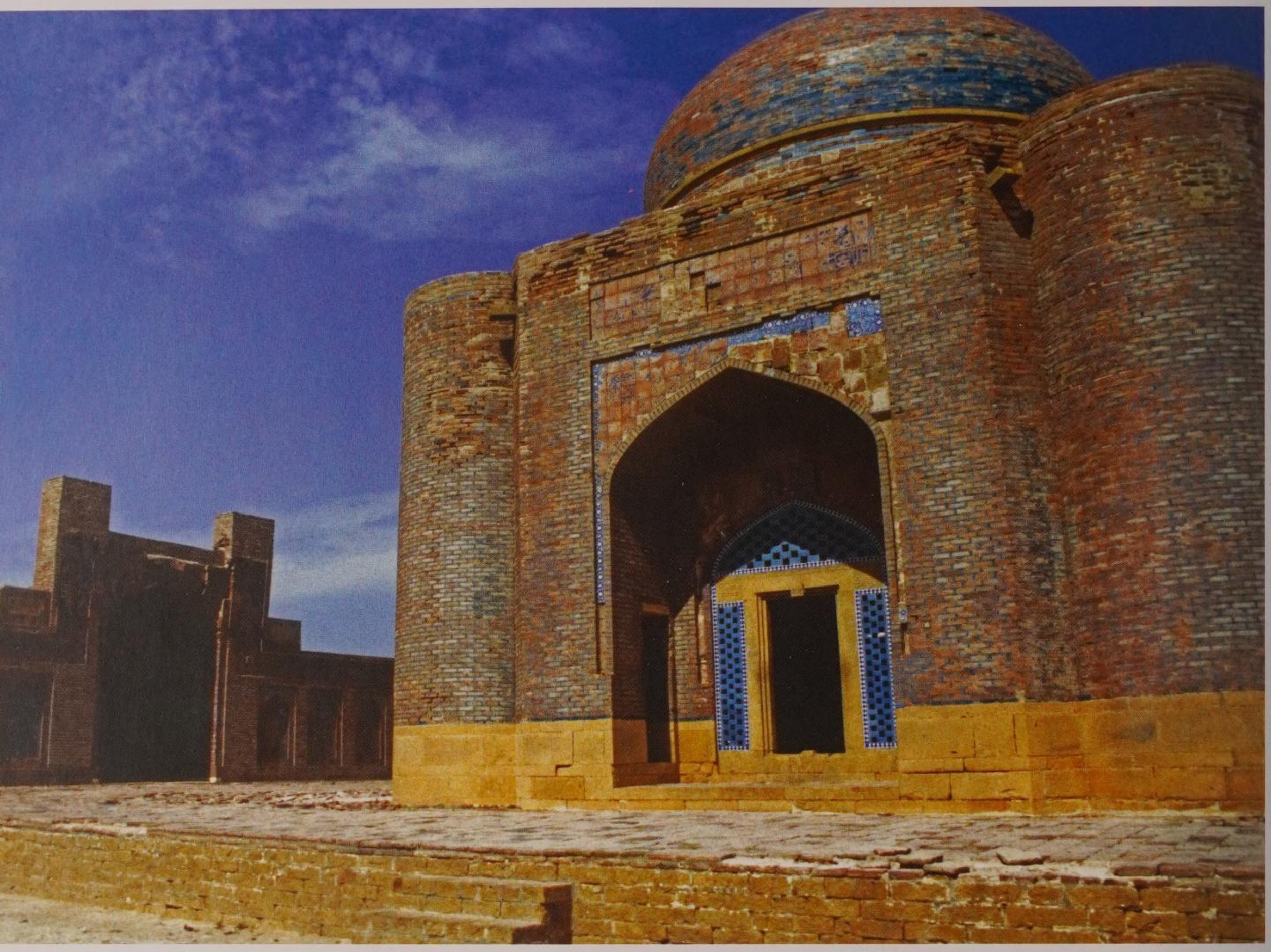
8

Chhatri over sarcophagi, Chaukhandi, Sindh, 17th century.

9

Sarcophagus, Chaukhandi, detail of jewellery iconography.



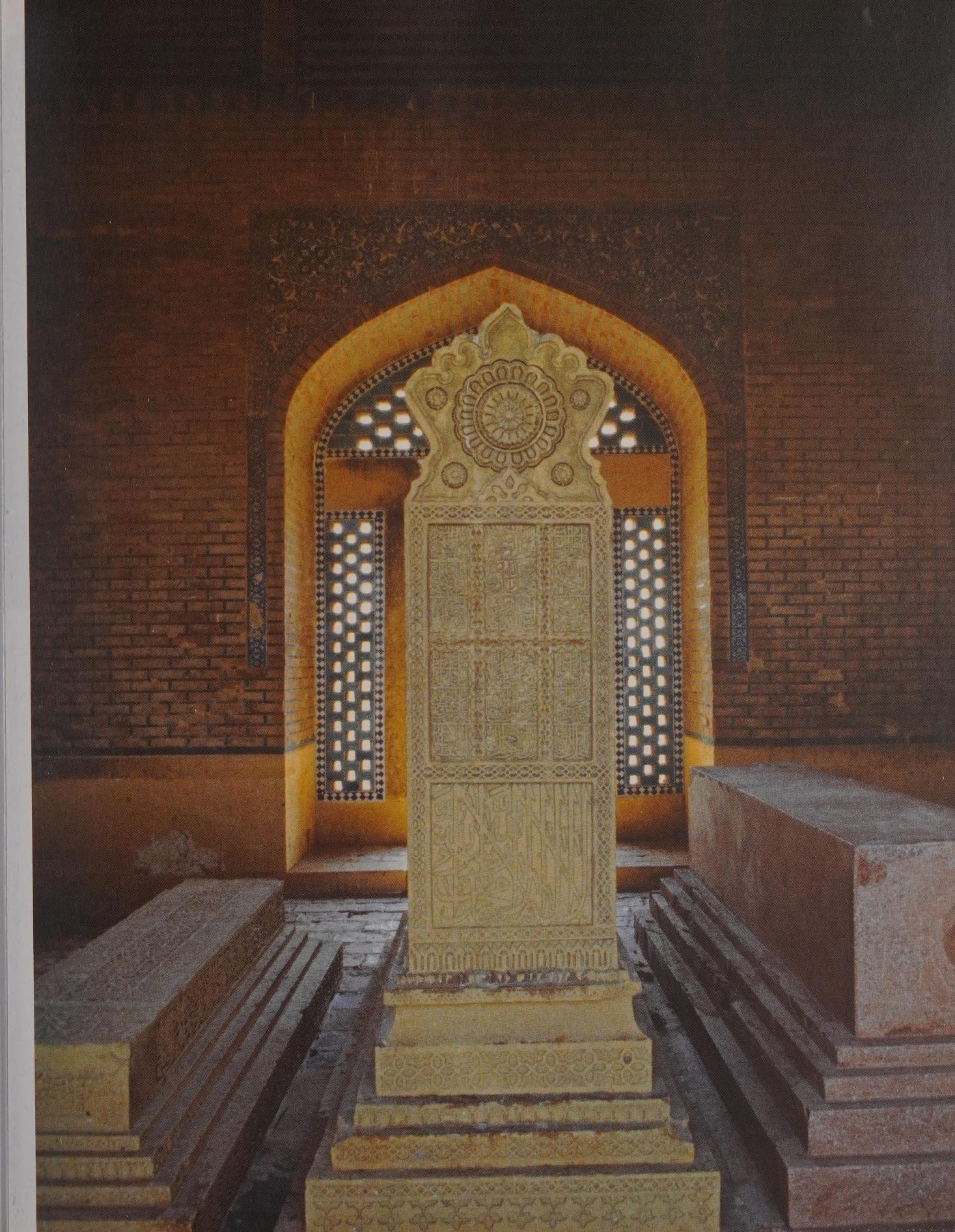


10
Tomb of Diwan Shurfa Khan, Makli Hill, Thatta, Sindh, 1638.

11 *opposite*
Tomb of Diwan Shurfa Khan, Makli Hill, interior.

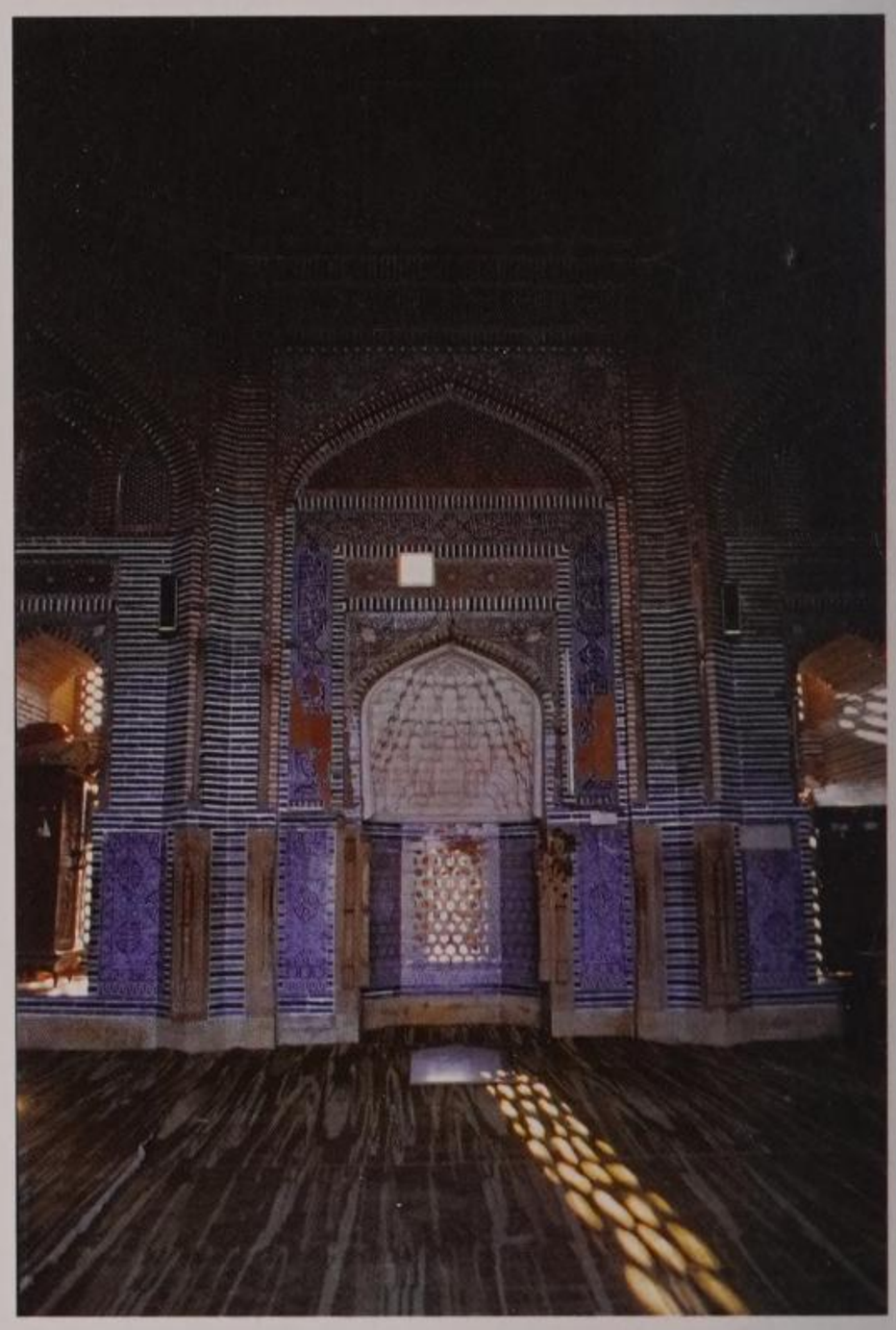
Arghuns sought land appanages farther east, ultimately reaching Thatta and filling the political vacuum left by the decline of the Sammas. The Tarkhans continued as *jagirdar*s in Sindh and Gujarat after the Mughal annexation of Sindh in 1591–92. The tomb of Diwan Shurfa Khan (1638) (figures 10 and 11), a courtier of the Tarkhans, represents the introduction of Timurid architectural traditions into Sindh.

In its lower portions, Diwan Shurfa Khan's brick-built tomb (figure 10) follows the attenuated aesthetic of Timurid architecture. Each of the four corners is buttressed with an engaged circular tower, aiding in the transition to an octagonal plan in the building's interior. The dome, however, sits atop a drum that is much lower than those found in the Timurid buildings of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Herat. Additionally, the tomb complex is delineated on all four sides by a substantial perimeter wall which, on its western flank, houses a large mihrab made all the more prominent by its iwan-like projection. Despite palpable Timurid aesthetic elements in the building, the cenotaphs of the courtier and his family (figure 11) evidence the continued influence of Gujarati stone-working traditions in Sindh. The principal cenotaph, with its slender proportions, fine calligraphic, floral, and geometric ornamentation, and prominent lotus medallion all hearken to the famous stone-carving schools of coastal



12

Congregational mosque, Thatta,
Sindh, built by Shah Jahan, 1644–47.



13

Shah Jahan's congregational mosque,
Thatta, interior of prayer area.

Gujarat, particularly the workshops of the affluent port city of Cambay.[16]

The constant influx of distinct architectural strains into Sindh beginning in the 8th century, and their productive assimilation and creative local interpretation by Sindhi artisans are best demonstrated in a comparative examination of the congregational mosque of Thatta, commissioned by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57) in 1644 (figures 12 and 13), and the tomb of Isa Khan Tarkhan II (born c. 1566) at Makli Hill, built in 1644 (figures 14 and 15). While both of these large complexes make references to imported building traditions, their rootedness within the Sindhi architectural idiom is equally perceptible.

Shah Jahan's mosque, replacing the earlier congregational mosque of 1388, architecturally introduced the imperial Mughal presence into Sindh. However, the complex does not subscribe to well established Mughal conventions as represented by the domed, red sandstone and marble constructions at Fatehpur

14
Tomb complex of Isa Khan Tarkhan II, Makli Hill, Thatta, Sindh, 1644.

15

Tomb of Isa Khan Tarkhan II,
Makli Hill, interior of tomb.

Sikri (1590s), decorated with intricate inlay. Rather, the building hearkens to Central Asian Timurid grandeur in its brick construction and spacious courtyard bordered by four *iwans* (see figure 12). As was the case at the tomb of Diwan Shurfa Khan (figure 10), however, the ultimate proportions of the complex are not as attenuated as in Timurid architecture, and the decoration of both interiors (see figure 13) and exteriors exclusively with the distinctive, bright blue glazed tile of Sindh has been termed the "climax" of the medium.[17]

Simultaneous with these Timurid-derived but originally interpreted brick-and-tile building traditions, post-and-lintel (trabeate) limestone construction also flourished in Lower Sindh, as seen at the tomb of Isa Khan Tarkhan II. The double-storeyed tomb with its square, solid columns and intricately carved decoration reminds one of the sultanate architecture of Gujarat. The tomb's interiors (figure 15), moreover, also imitate the latter's airiness and light despite the trabeate construction. Indeed, Isa Khan's sojourn in northern Gujarat as a regional Mughal governor probably led to his bringing back to Sindh not only Gujarati building practices but also stone-workers.[18] Nevertheless, the iwan-like mihrab in the perimeter wall, and the distinctive tracery-like treatment of the stone (see figure 14) betray local Sindhi assimilation as well. It can be summarized, then, that while Sindh was always open to new architectural inspirations, its talented stone-workers' interpretations were original, rooted in the traditions they had inherited from at least a millennium before.

FIGURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All images courtesy Alka Patel.

NOTES

1 Overviews of the many surviving descriptions include Sir Henry Elliot, *Historians of Sind* (ed. John

Dowson), Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., (2nd edition) 1955–56; see also Buzurg ibn Shahriyar the Sailor (c. 900–953), *The Book of the Wonders of India* (trans. G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville), London: East-West Publications, 1981; and especially the 13th-century Arabic translation of an 8th-century Persian account of the Arab conquest of Sindh by Ali ibn Hamid al-Kufi (fl. 1216), *Chachnama, an Ancient History of Sind* (trans. Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg), Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Dellhi, 1979 (discussed below in main text).

2 See article by Mumtaz Currim in this volume.

3 *Chachnama*, pp. 66–73 and passim.

4 *Chachnama*, esp. p. 188; also Francesco Gabrieli, "Muhammad ibn Qasim ath-Thaqafi and the Arab Conquest of Sind", *East and West* 15, 3–4 (1965): 281–95.

5 See Derryl N. Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989, pp. 59–64; and Alka Patel, "The Mosque in South Asia: Beginnings", in Finbarr Barry Flood, ed., *Piety and Politics in the Early Indian Mosque*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, Fall 2008.

6 Maclean, p. 38; Gabrieli, pp. 286ff.

7 See Samuel H. Stern, "Isma'ili Propaganda and Fatimid Rule in Sind", *Islamic Culture* 23, 4 (1940): 298–307; and Maclean, pp. 130, 132–40.

8 The Mongol campaigns did not fail to cause some disruption in Sindh itself, e.g. in 1221–23 when the Khawrazm-shah Jalal al-Din Mingburnu (r. 1220–31), fleeing before the Mongol armies, briefly invaded Sindh and Gujarat. See also *Encyclopedia of Islam*, "Sind".

9 For Mirpurkhas, see the articles by Sabyasachi Mukherjee and by Pratapaditya Pal in this volume. The architectural dialogue between the Indus-delta temples and the region's Islamic architecture is treated by Holly Edwards, "Centralizing the Margins: Commemorative Architecture in the Indus Valley", in Abha Narain Lambah and Alka Patel, eds., *The Architecture of the Indian Sultanates*, Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2006, pp. 18–29. The artistic and political connections between Sindh and Gujarat are elucidated by Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat: Architecture and Society during the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004, esp. pp. 36–38, 79, 112ff.

10 See Monique Kevran, "Le port multiple des bouches de l'Indus: Barbariké, Deb, Daybul, Lahori Bandar, Diul Sinde", in *Sites et monuments disparus d'après les témoignages des voyageurs, Res Orientales* VIII, Paris: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1996, p. 47, and figs. 9–14; and Asma Ibrahim and Kaleem Lashari, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries in the Lower Deltaic Area of Indus", in *Journal of Pakistan Archaeology Forum* 2, i–ii (1993): 1–44.

11 See Sarah F.D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 13–17.

12 As put forth by Robert Hillenbrand, "Turco-Iranian Elements in the Medieval Architecture of Pakistan: the Case of the Tomb of Rukn-i Alam at Multan", *Muqarnas* IX (1992): 148–74.

13 See Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Thatta: Islamic Architecture*, Islamabad: Institute of Islamic History, Culture and Civilization, 1982; and Annemarie Schimmel, *Makli Hill: A Center of Islamic Culture in Sindh*, Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, 1983, esp. pp. 24ff.

14 Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind*, Vol. XLVI, *Archaeological Survey of India, Imperial Series*, Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1929, pp. 115ff.

15 See J.Ph. Vogel, "Tombs at Hinidan in Las Bela", *ASI Annual Report (1902–3)*, esp. p. 215.

16 See esp. Elizabeth Lambourn, "Carving and Communities: Marble Carving for Muslim Patrons at Khambhat and around the Indian Ocean Rim, Late Thirteenth–Mid-Fifteenth Centuries", in Alka Patel, ed., *Communities and Commodities: Western India and the Indian Ocean, 11th–15th Centuries, Ars Orientalis* XXIV, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004, pp. 99–133.

17 Dani, p. 197.

18 See Schimmel, pp. 21–22, 24ff.

1

Banbhore, identified with
the port of Debal.
Photograph courtesy Mumtaz Currim.

The Banbhore Palimpsest

Mumtaz Currim

The Site

Banbhore, a famous archaeological site in Sindh, is located on a barren coast approximately 64 kilometres (40 miles) southeast of Karachi off the Karachi–Hyderabad Highway (figure 1). The site, a level mound 18 metres in height, is spread across the north bank of the dried up Gharo creek on the southern border of the ancient Kohistan plateau. Crusted with sand and salt, the creek was at one time a major inlet for long-distance and inter-regional traffic from the Arabian Sea headed for the Indus delta and its commerce. The creek remained an important arm of the Indus estuary until its gradual silting from the 13th century onward when a southward shift in the flow of the river led to the abandonment of many inhabited sites.[1] Among these was Debal, a port that flourished during the Arab rule of Sindh between the 8th and 13th centuries, whose exact location long eluded archaeologists and scholars.

The probability of Banbhore being the site of the port city of Debal aroused considerable interest in the 1960s when an excavation team led by Dr F.A. Khan of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, struck evidence of long-time occupation of the site. Earlier, General Alexander Cunningham at the end of the 19th century and Henry Cousens during the 1920s had carried out surface surveys. In 1930, N.G. Majumdar of the Archaeological Survey of India laid exploratory trenches to discover that the settlement had belonged to a particular historical period. In 1951, Leslie Alcock of the Pakistan Department of Archaeology examined the fortifications and undertook a preliminary excavation to conclude that the settlement was of Arab origin. But he was unable to identify or obtain a clear cross-section of the underlying pre-Islamic levels.

The team working under the direction of Dr F.A. Khan carried out large-scale operations for eight consecutive seasons from March 1958, four months every winter, to lay open an inland harbour town with a fortified citadel, an anchorage, and extensive outer city at the mouth of an old channel of the Indus. In a preliminary report first published in 1960 Khan states that the purpose of the investigations had been to determine the origin of the settlement and to learn something of the life and culture of its early community of Muslims.[2] The excavations gained greater significance when the team struck signs of occupation dating to the 1st century of the Common Era at deeper levels. Whereas the preliminary horizontal explorations enabled them to mark out the topography of a harbour town, the deep diggings revealed 17 layers of building phases and cultural material of Islamic and pre-Islamic origin. The cross-section study

of its topographical layout with the stratigraphical analysis resulted in a chronology that indicated three distinct historic periods – Scytho-Parthian, Hindu-Sassanian, and Islamic. The levels were, however, not uniform in number, composition, or thickness throughout the site.

The pre-Islamic levels were exposed to a limited extent, enough to mark out distinguishing points. Khan gives brief accounts of these in the richly illustrated 1976 edition of his report that includes the Scytho-Parthian period and its pottery and the Hindu-Sassanian period and its remains of a Shiva temple, stone sculptures, and ceramics.[3] Khan mentions that the cultural break here is sudden and complete so that no material of undoubted Islamic origin was observed, though Hindu material continued to exist in the Islamic period spanning Umayyad and Abbasid rule. The settlement was clearly mapped and cultural findings and structural remains listed. The findings included 14 Kufic inscriptions carved on dressed sandstone, fragments of pottery of different origins and types, coins, and glass, bone, and ivory objects that were conserved in the Site Museum established in 1969.

The Islamic Period

To what extent was the purpose of determining "the origin of the settlement and something of the lifestyle and culture of the early community of Muslims" achieved? The present article focuses on this and on Khan's observation that an analysis of the structural and cultural material led archaeological scholars and historians to identify the settlement with Debal. For Khan, the question of the identification of Banbhore with Debal was "solved beyond any doubt".

However, the issue of identification does not seem to have been resolved quite so easily. Even in 1982, Annemarie Schimmel mentions that the exact site of "Daibul" had not been identified.[4] After Khan's preliminary report of 1960, a series of articles examining the issue (by S.M. Ashfaque, Muhammad Abdul Ghafur, and Pervin T. Nasir) appeared between 1964 and 1969 in *Pakistan Archaeology* (Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan).[5] Ashfaque in particular expressed the need to rule out other sites. Later, S. Qudratullah Fatimi even distinguished between the existence of a seaport and a riverside entrepot.[6]

The above scholars compared the findings with textual references in contemporary sources such as the chronicles kept by Arab historians and geographers, Khordadbeh, Baladhuri, Masudi, Istakhri, Hawkal, Muqaddasi, Hudud al-Alam, al-Biruni, Yakut, and al-Idrisi, between the 9th and 14th centuries. As Josef Schwartzberg points out, from the mid-9th century onward Arab traders and scholars amassed abundant knowledge of Indian coastal locales and data related to navigation in the Indian Ocean area.[7] Their research was complicated by problems like variations in the calculation of distances between known ports and Debal measured in *farsakh*s (a unit of distance), and differences in travel time and in the latitudes and longitudes mentioned by six of the geographers. While according to M.A. Ghafur the latter differences were to be expected at a time when lunar charts and clocks did not exist, Monique Kervran from the university Institut d'art et d'archaeologie, Paris, attributes the variations in the distances between places possibly to the modifications resulting from changes in the trajectory of the Indus river.[8]

The Indus region is known to have undergone marked geomorphic transformations. The shifts in the course of the river and its channels, the silting and erosion of land, created newer configurations that brought about changes in the names and locations of ports and the abandonment of old sites. Whereas other ports on the Sindh

coast were identified, Debal was not, and research opened the existence of alternative names – Dabal, al-Daybul, Deb, Devala, Diwal, and Diul – as also the possibility of Debal being a toponym for ports in general. Schwartzberg records changes in its location and name in a series of maps accompanied by text[9] – Dabal, Devala, al-Daibul (two different positions in a single instance), and Debal – and Debal's usage as toponym for a port. Fatimi refers to Dibul, a district, not just a port, along with those of Makran and Sindh cited by an Armenian historian-geographer Musa Khorin in the early centuries of the Common Era as the origin of Debal.[10] It is Andre Wink who points out, "Among the shifting channels of the Indus delta the very site of Debal or 'Daybul' has long remained uncertain but is now usually identified with Banbhore… it remains possible however that there were successive places which were called Debal… [and it] appears to have changed its name to 'Banbhore' in the early eighteenth century only and was not known as such except as an archaeological site."[11] Near to this, excavation team member M.R. Mughal ascertains, on the authority of medieval historian Baladhuri, that "Banbhore has been identified with the port of Daybul, which was given as dowry to the Sassanian king Bahram V in the fifth century CE", and adds: "It was around the eighth century that the site evolved into a fortified city enclosing 167 hectares with an inner residential and commercial area and an industrial sector outside the defences."[12]

Writing in a wider framework, Kervran refers to the Banbhore site as "undoubtedly the ancient and famous city of Deb before Islam, Daybul during the Islamic period".[13] She elaborates further on this in a three-part study, combining her ground research in the northwest Indus delta with the coverage of the region and its ports in literary and cartographical sources from the Classical, Late Antiquity, Early Middle, Medieval, and Modern periods to establish links between archaeological findings, charts, and literary sources.[14]

The Citadel

Debal was the port of entry into Sindh that fell to young Arab general Muhammad ibn Qasim in 711 CE during an expedition on which he was sent by the Umayyad governor of Baghdad, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al Thaqafi (d. 714). This was part of a move to eliminate piracy along coastal Sindh and capture a port important to Arab seaborne trade with western India, Ceylon, and China. A new city evolved during the 8th century on this pre-Islamic settlement on the left bank of the Indus. It was divided into sectors and protected by a fortified stone wall. A 30-foot-deep trench dug on the outer face of the fortifications in the northeastern margin of the citadel's central sector uncovered four building phases. These, together with the ceramic finds, helped to work out a chronology. The four phases were identified as the Umayyad, 711–750; early Abbasid, 750–892; later Abbasid, 892–12th century; and the Decline, late 12th to mid-13th century. While the impressive Umayyad walls with semicircular bastions at regular intervals were built of massive blocks of semi-dressed and undressed limestone set in mud, and were strengthened by a stone revetment of a style prevalent in the contemporary Islamic world, those of the early Abbasid period though similar in shape and size had core gaps filled with mud bricks. Major repairs carried out during the later Abbasid period indicated that the fortifications were reduced in scale and strength. Thereafter, during the Decline, the wall surviving on the eastern half of the mound displayed shoddy workmanship and gaps filled with sandy soil. This was the time when the once flourishing port city is said to have dwindled to "a military outpost". Its end was brought about by the shifting of the river's course

and a violent disturbance that left behind a number of skeletons, some with iron heads embedded in them, and signs of torching.

According to site records, the citadel measured over 600 metres from east to west and 366 metres from north to south to contain a well-planned city with residential, commercial, and administrative buildings in its central, western, northeastern, and southern sectors. The residential quarters were divided into blocks marked by well-oriented streets where the courtyard houses of the elite were built of semi-dressed stone, with thin baked bricks used as tiles, and floors that were lime-plastered. Leading structures included a Grand Mosque and a *maktab* or administrative building in the central sector, and a semicircular palatial mansion in the northeastern sector which could have been the governor's residence.

The citadel's fortifications were known to have had three gates – eastern, northeastern, and southern – each serving a specific purpose. While the eastern gate gave access to the outer city and its industrial area with manufacturing units and a large lake, the sophisticated northeastern gate guarded a passage to the lake for the residents of the semicircular mansion. It was the southern gateway, flanked by a pair of solid semicircular bastions, and a massive hallway that were most imposing. Their steps of dressed stone at the end of a broad street led to a terraced waterfront and a well-preserved anchorage with berthing grooves facing the Gharo creek. Literary sources mention that the port town generated revenue through participation in the Indian Ocean trading network to support an urban centre. And, while historian Baladhuri in the 9th century places Debal inside a creek, Muqaddasi in the 10th century situates it to the west of the Mihran (Indus) with the sea reaching its walls, and Idrisi in the 12th century elaborates that, though arid, it was well populated and "the only station for ships bound for Sind and elsewhere. The commercial business includes a variety of articles and people seem to indulge in a diverse range of pursuits…ships [arrive] loaded with products from Oman and also ships from China and India…. They buy textiles and other Chinese objects and perfumes from India…the merchandise is sold locally and…bartered in the countryside."[15]

At high tide, the sea is said to have beaten against the wall; tell-tale marks exist even now. Significantly, the time-span of the rise and decline of Debal, its existence as the principal fortified town of a district, and importance as a trading centre tally with the harbour town unearthed at Banbhore.

The Grand Mosque

The excavations centred around the Grand Mosque, the nucleus of the large settlement, where its four built phases were seen to tally with four periods of Muslim occupation. The ground plan indicated a hypostyle courtyard mosque of the type found in West Asia in the 7th century. Moreover, like the Umayyad mosques built in Kufa in 670 CE and Wasit in 702, the qibla wall in the prayer hall oriented to the Kaba was seen to lack a mihrab or prayer niche. Almost square, 39 metres west to east and 37 metres north to south, it had boundary walls of finely dressed limestone set in mud mortar, two main doorways in the eastern and northern walls, and a rectangular prayer hall opening to a courtyard surrounded by cloisters. The rectangular prayer hall and cloisters seem to have had a superstructure of flat roofs supported by wooden columns. These columns having decayed long ago, only rows of stone blocks or hollow stumps that had held them survived, some of them carved stones recycled from the Hindu period (figure 2). Remains of the Hindu temple mentioned in early chronicles were found in the citadel's western sector. While stones from its tower were recycled, some lingams were used for the lowermost steps of the two gateways.

When deep vertical trenches were dug along the mosque's western and eastern walls, narrow streets that marked off the mosque from surrounding buildings were seen to reach down several levels. The street adjoining the western wall reached down 11 levels and was topped by a clay floor and industrial debris, and the one along the eastern boundary wall went down 14 street levels and was in use till the end. Diggings inside the prayer hall revealed six well-defined clay floors that led to two further layers, numbered seven and eight, below which was an over 2-metre accumulation of mixed debris that had spread into the courtyard. Embedded in it were a large number of pieces of painted glass, white paste, and glazed potsherds of an early Muslim type, one with writing in early Naskh characters. Below an occupational level and concrete floor numbered 10 and 10A, no such glazed sherds were found, only red burnished earthenware characteristic of the pre-Islamic period. And a trench beyond the doorway in the eastern wall went down further to layers 15, 15A, 16, and 17 to show a total change in the pottery type, that belonging to the pre-Islamic period.

The above findings form part of a detailed analysis of the mosque made by Ashfaque (see note 5) that takes into account field records and observations. Ashfaque agrees that the mosque belonged to the Umayyad period (661–750), its foundations having sunk into the pre-Islamic occupation level, and that there was a complete break in ceramic and pottery types in the lower levels.

Kufic Inscriptions

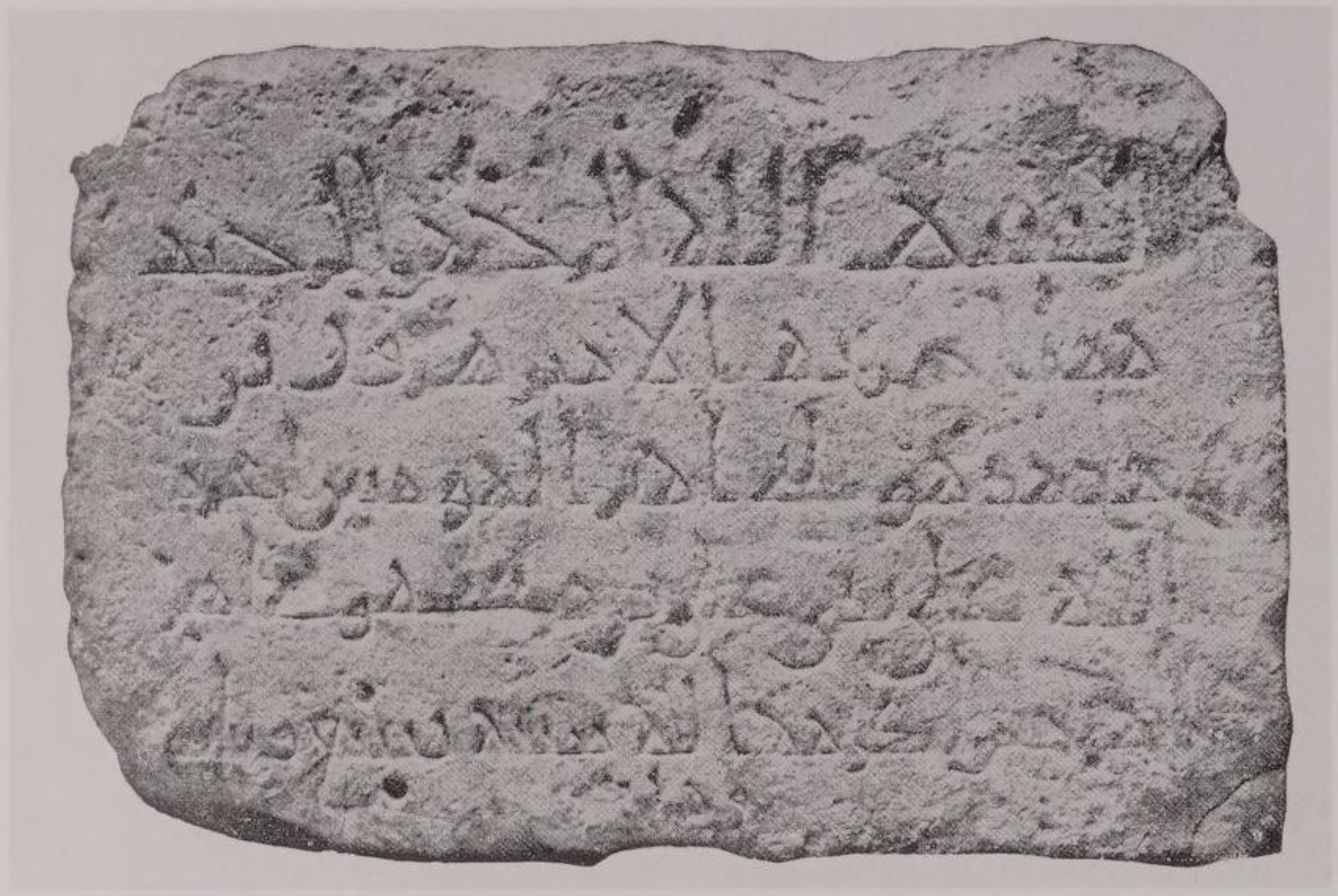
Fourteen inscriptions in Kufic script carved on dressed stone slabs, two of them dated, were recovered from different areas and levels in the Grand Mosque. They are among the earliest known epigraphic material belonging to the early Muslim period in the subcontinent and the largest number found in any one place (figure 3).

2

Reused carved stone pieces in the Grand Mosque. From *Banbhore* by Dr F.A. Khan, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1976.

Unfortunately they were not discovered in situ. Defaced by weathering, neither were they easy to decipher. Ghafur (see note 5) writes that among them one is totally obliterated, barely a word or two remain of two others, entire lines are missing from some, and the two dated ones do not have firm renderings. He reproduces, translates, and examines them critically and acknowledges assistance received from M.A. Quader, Assistant Superintendent, East Pakistan Circle.

According to Khan's preliminary report (see note 2), a reading of the first dated inscription indicated that the Banbhore mosque was the earliest one built on the subcontinent. But the date 109 AH/727 CE came under dispute. Examining the inscription in detail against a historical background and palaeographically in his 1966 article, Ghafur revises the five-line inscription into a six-line one as well as the Hijri date and the names of the caliph and the governor in it. The date is revised to 230 AH (845 CE), the caliph's name from Marwan to Harun, and the governor's name from Ali ibn Musa to the later Ali ibn Isa known for his building activities. Sheila Blair, writing on problems in deciphering early inscriptions, also points to a later



3

Kufic inscription carved on a dressed stone slab, discovered in the Grand Mosque. From *Banbhore* by Dr F.A. Khan, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1976.

4

Bronze door knocker from al-Mansurah, Sindh. National Museum, Islamabad. By kind permission of Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan.

date: "The text, however, uses the phrase *mawla amir al-mu'minin*, a title that did not appear until mid-eighth century, and the final word in the inscription should probably be read not *mi'a* ['hundred'] but *mi'at*[*ayn*] ['two hundred'], making the date 209/824–5."[16] Ghafur also mentions the title's later usage.

The second inscription, found in three large pieces and some small fragments among burnt bricks in the southeastern cloister, is engraved in beautiful decorative Kufic characteristic of the 10th century. Ghafur has called it floriated Kufic and has listed its palaeographic characteristics in minute detail. He has provided the name of the governor from an incomplete fragment to point out that the inscription records the restoration undertaken by Amir Muhammad ibn Abdullah in 294 AH, subsequent to an earthquake that occurred in 280 AH. Muhammad was the son of Abdullah ibn Umar (883–913 CE), governor of Mansurah, the medieval capital of Sindh. Interestingly, whereas Ashfaque considers this to be the only specimen of floriated Kufic on the subcontinent, Mark Zebrowski features inscriptions in "a superb, bold Kufic style which compares favourably with the best Umayyad and Abbasid inscriptions from the Middle East proper" on four bronze door knockers unearthed from Abdullah's palace at Mansurah (figure 4).[17] The ornamental Kufic on the knocker discs is similar in style to the Banbhore inscription. Further, describing the style in which this inscription is carved, Ashfaque points out that whereas the words here "sink in the surface with a slant and make a V angle", the words in all the other inscriptions are incised perpendicularly. It may be pointed out here that carvings in stucco, wood, and crystal during the Abbasid period used such a style.

Ghafur comments that the Umayyad origin of the mosque is proved beyond doubt on stratigraphical grounds, but is uncertain whether the earlier dated inscription belonged to the mosque's initial phase, and states that the later inscription expresses blessings on the caliph and the governor for the restoration, with no mention of a mosque.

Coins

Thousands of silver and copper coins, and one of gold, minted by Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, were recovered. Many were corroded and undecipherable but those better preserved were treated and studied to work out a chronology and some knowledge of the period. Classified as pre-reform and post-reform, the pre-reform coins comprise the Arab-Sassanian and Arab-Byzantine types and the post-reform the purely Arab anti-iconic ones introduced by the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik ibn Marwan during 695 and 697 CE.[18]

The Arab-Sassanian silver and copper coins had a Zoroastrian fire-altar with figures on the reverse and a conventional portrait on the obverse with Bismillah or Allah in Kufic characters superimposed upon it. One such silver coin in the Site Museum (acc. no. 5126), carries the bust of a Sassanian ruler, a short legend in Pehlavi, and a Kufic inscription with fire-altar on the obverse, and name of the mint and date on the reverse. The Arab-Byzantine coins are known to be

similar but only copper coins were recovered in Banbhore.

The large number of post-reform silver and copper coins bear dates but no images (figure 5). From the few deciphered, two (acc. nos. 3922 and 1990), issued in 714 CE in the reign of the sixth Umayyad caliph al-Walid ibn al-Malik from two different mints, have the *kalima* or attestation of faith on the obverse and the *Sura al-Ikhlas* (avowal verse) on the reverse. Another such was issued by the tenth Umayyad caliph Hisham in 742 CE.

The gold, silver, and copper coins from the Abbasid period (750–1250), when Arabic was the state language, bear names of caliphs and legends (figure 6). The gold dinar minted in Egypt in 844 CE was found on the lime-plastered floor of a brick house in the citadel's northern sector. Beautifully inscribed, it bears a Quranic verse and the name of the ninth caliph Harun-al-Wasiq Billah, while a silver coin issued by Caliph al-Mamun (813–833) bears his name and his titles Amir al-Mominin and al-Fadl. The silver coin bears a firm date to indicate the Abbasid usage of the title *amir al-mominin*, defender of the faithful.

5
Silver dirham of Al-Daybul (Debal) mint, struck soon after the Umayyad conquest of Sindh. Photograph courtesy Shailendra Bhandare.

6
Coins of Hisham ibn Amru with a six-pointed star. Photograph courtesy J.P. Goenka, Kolkata.

Ceramics

Ceramic and earthen wares get broken easily but are not destroyed. Thus specimens of various type and origin were found embedded in sand, ash, and bone. Many of these are now housed in the Site Museum. Classified as pre-Islamic and Islamic, and local and imported types, they confirmed the harbour's long-time role as an entrepot and enabled researchers to carry out comparative studies with wares unearthed at Arabian and Persian sites.

Pre-Islamic types

Khan (see note 2) writes that the Hindu-Sassanian levels below layer 15 are distinguished by a total absence of glazed ware and that the unglazed ware is inferior in fabric and technique. The motifs used in the principal types – plain, polychrome, stamped, moulded, and red burnished wares – are interesting. The thin-textured polychrome ware is painted with geometrical and floral patterns and stylized bird and animal motifs in black, red, dark brown, and yellow over a cream slip. Motifs include the lotus, sunflower, rising sun, and friezes with peacock with elongated tail, antelope, and fish. And while the stamped ware is largely decorated with geometrical patterns, the moulded ware has flowers and figures. Sassanian influence is noticeable in the friezes of animals and birds executed in relief, encircled with dots and circles, on the broad-shouldered *kuzas* (pitchers) with spouts (figure 7).

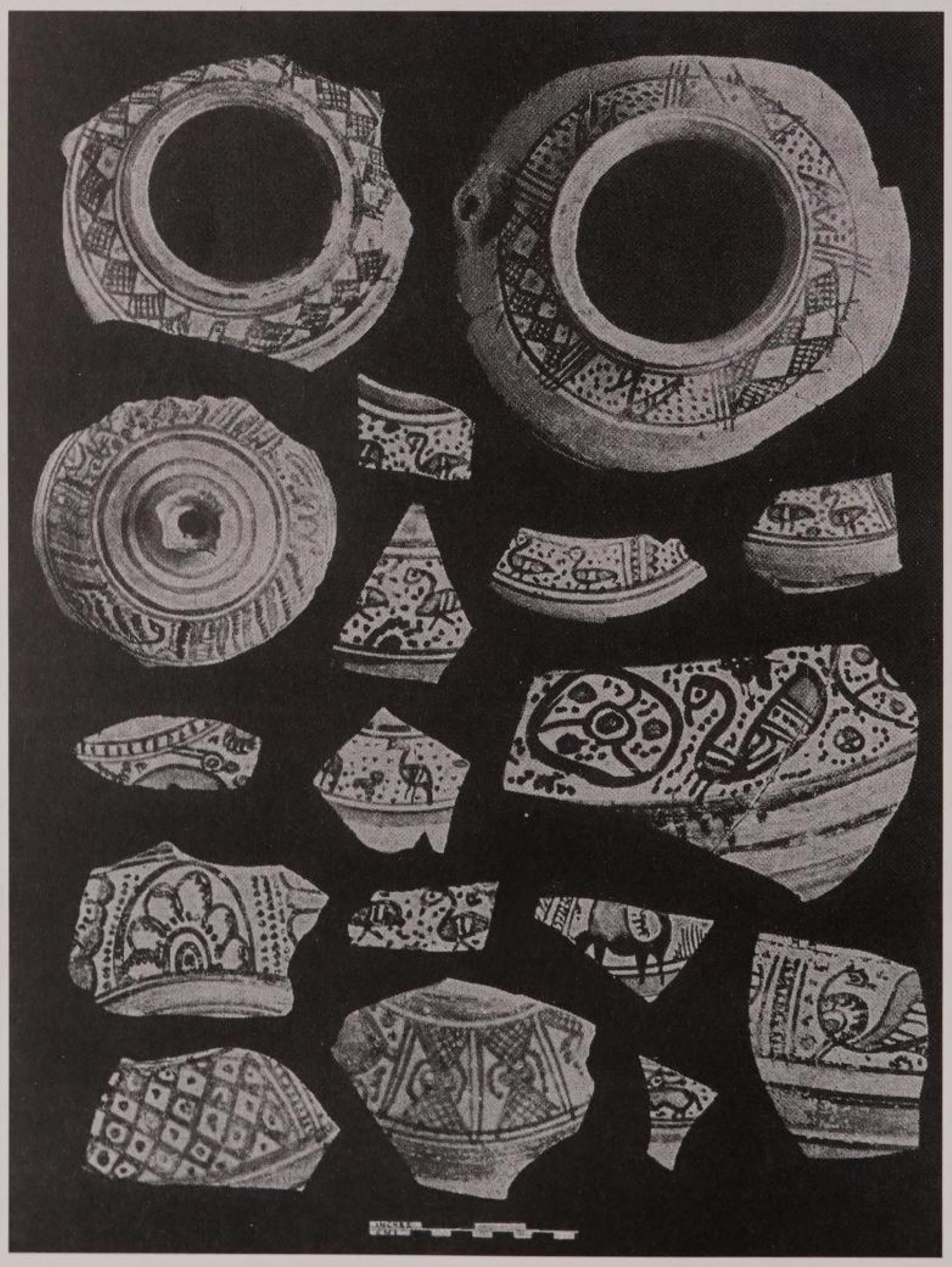
Islamic types

The light-textured pottery from the Umayyad, Early Abbasid, and Later Abbasid levels includes unglazed moulded ware and a variety of glazed ware. The unglazed household pottery comprises a variety of complete and incomplete pots and medium-sized *kuzas* that exhibit Persian and pre-Islamic influence. But another influence is seen in a thin textured type finely decorated with floral-cum-geometric patterns and Kufic writing in relief. According to Khan, this ware, made from a white paste not known locally before the Arab invasion, was apparently imported from Syria where it was made in Umayyad times. An exquisite small cup with handle and Kufic inscription recovered at the site is similar to the one recovered from Susa in southwestern Iran, now seen in the Louvre, Paris.

In the glazed ware from the Umayyad levels, Sassanian influence surfaces in jars coated with a thick blue-green glass glaze and decorated with patterns containing flowers, bunches of grapes, creepers, and a combination of lines in high relief. This type continues into the upper Islamic levels but the glaze becomes thinner and less bright and clear.

The influence of Islamic Persian culture as distinct from Sassanian is evident in the Abbasid period. The glazed pottery unearthed from earlier levels in Banbhore resembles Persian ware between the 9th and 11th centuries, in particular the inscriptions in Arabic that resemble works from Nishapur. Among slip-painted specimens, there are the splashed and mottled lead-glazed vessels, delicately painted tin-glazed and lustre-glazed wares. The specimens of glazed cups, saucers, and dishes from the later 11th–13th-century levels differ; they belong to what is known as the *sgraffito* style, ornamented with patterns that resemble Kufic characters, scratched into the glaze to reveal the different colour of the lower layer. Since these specimens are comparable to dated material, they are of great archaeological value.

7
Sassanian type moulded pottery. From *Banbhore* by Dr F.A. Khan, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1976.



8
Islamic type painted pottery. From *Banbhore* by Dr F.A. Khan, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1976.

Kervran compares Indian ceramics found on Arabian harbour sites, and distinguishes between the red polished ware produced in the earlier five centuries of the Common Era and the thin textured polychrome painted ware dating around the 8th century.[19] She calls the latter fine painted ware and states it had been wrongly considered local, not Indian. Again, Kervran notes how when Indian ceramics were unearthed in various quantities and qualities from seven historical levels at Suhar, a harbour site on the northern coast of Oman, the stamped and moulded wares were similar to those found at Banbhore. Khan's 1976 description of the common form of the "fine painted ware", such as the medium-sized spouted *kuza*s, uncovered at Banbhore, matched her findings (figure 8). Kervran also points out how "fragments from level VI onwards have their closest parallels in Banbhore and other sites of the Indus delta" and gives examples of the great number of ceramics imported from India during the Abbasid period. More significant is her comment on the source of Indian ceramics unearthed along coastal Persia and Arabia: "The workshops producing these almost always mica-bearing potteries appear to be located, in the earlier period, in Gujarat and the neighbouring areas, and in the medieval period, in the Indus delta."

Kervran's concurrence on the Banbhore site being the port of Debal during the Islamic period involved exhaustive research, ground level and textual, into diverse sites along the Indian Ocean littoral and the Indus delta. Of particular value is her interdisciplinary and comparative approach, a method Himanshu Prabha Ray advocated in her preamble to *Archaeology of Seafaring* (see note 1): "The archaeology of early medieval coastal sites continues to be neglected with a majority of writings focusing on inscriptions or on literary sources.... Inputs from other regions of the Indian Ocean seldom figure in these discussions, let alone attempts at comparative analysis of the archaeological material."

A fresh survey of the Banbhore archaeological site that is equated with the leading port city of Debal on the eastern seaboard of Asia is necessary. A survey with the aid of newer techniques in archaeology, a comparative study of ground-level and textual records, and a closer inspection of findings is indicated; an analysis that would account for more than just a relative and absolute dating and examine the site in the context of the Indian Ocean littoral, and its trade and material culture and fort harbours. This could yield significant results.

NOTES

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3 Ibid.

4 Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, Leiden, 1982, p. 2.

5 S.M. Ashfaque, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore", *Pakistan Archaeology,* vol. 6, 1969; Muhammad Abdul Ghafur, "Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore, the Site of Daybul", *Pakistan Archaeology*, vol. 3, 1966; Pervin T. Nasir, "Coins from the Early Muslim Period from Banbhore", *Pakistan Archaeology*, vol. 6, 1969.

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9 Schwartzberg, op. cit., pp. 31–38.

10 Fatimi, op. cit.

11 Andre Wink, *The Frontier of Al Hind*, Leiden, 1990, vol. I, p. 181.

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1
Dyer's workshop,
Mohenjodaro, 2600 BCE.
Photograph:
Noorjehan Bilgrami.

The Living Textile Traditions of Sindh

Noorjehan Bilgrami

Glimpses from the Past

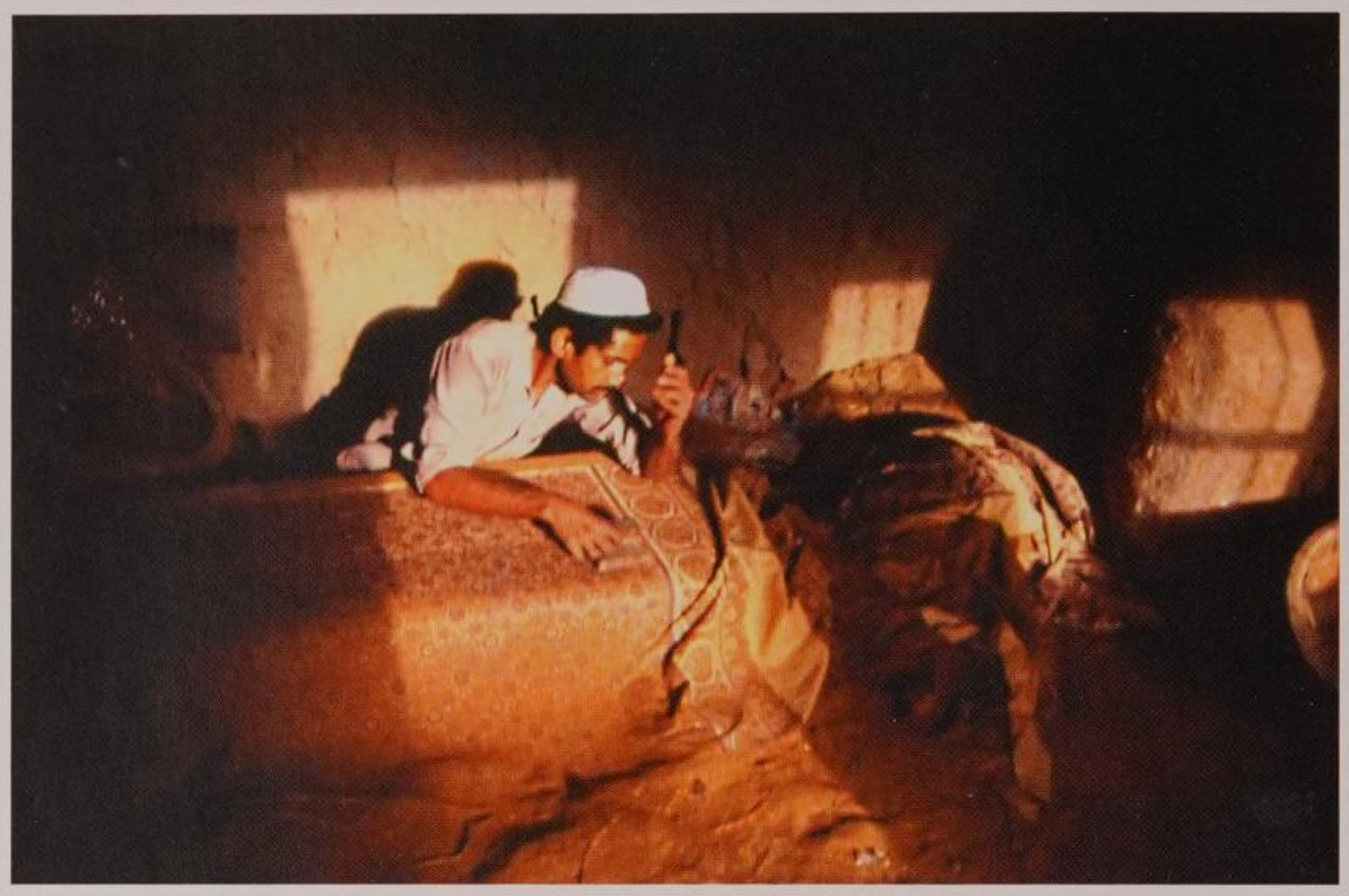
Situated at the crossroads of diverse cultural influences, Sindh's physical terrain has fostered a diversity of crafts since the birth of the Indus civilization 5,000 years ago. Subsequently, trade networks were established with China, Iran, Egypt, and the Mediterranean, and textiles were among the most important commodities being exported and imported, resulting in the cross-fertilization of textile technologies and cultural influences.

The earliest evidence of cotton was discovered at the site of Mehrgarh, Baluchistan in the 6th millennium BCE. By 3500 BCE spindle whorls were extensively used in the Indus basin. Cotton (*Gossypium arboreum*) was cultivated by the early Indus valley inhabitants, who had mastered the complex processing of the plant fibres, and this commodity was exported from the region to China, Egypt, Rome, and the kingdoms of Southeast Asia.

Terracotta figurines that were unearthed at Indus sites in Sindh and elsewhere display an array of textiles styled as pantaloons, skirts, turbans, and ornate headdresses.

> …numerous examples of preserved fibres have been recovered from metal objects. The most conclusive evidence found for textiles are two small terracotta beads from the Ravi phase at Harappa (3500 BC), with fabric impression on both faces [figure 2]. Silk is another fibre that was first used during the Indus civilization, and so far there are two examples of silk fibre from Harappa that were used for threading beads. They appear to belong to the wild silk moth (*Antheraea*), and this is commonly referred to as Tussar silk. The production of textiles may have been an important part of the urban economy from the urban Harappan phase of the Indus civilization (2600–1900 BC). [Kenoyer 2006.]

2
Fabric impression on a terracotta bead. Ravi Phase at Harappa, 3500 BCE. Photograph: Jonathan Mark Kenoyer.



3

Kharrh-printing of the mud resist by *por* – wooden blocks, Matiari. Photograph: Sohail Kazmi.

4

Tapai – sprinkling of water on spread *ajrak*s, at Baudero, on the banks of the Indus. Photograph: Sohail Kazmi.

Ajrak – The Jewel of Sindh

The celebrated stone statue of the "priest-king", discovered at Mohenjodaro, has trefoil motifs and circles on the draped shawl. It is commonly believed that the priest-king is wearing *ajrak*, a traditional textile of Sindh that is resist printed by wooden blocks, mordanted, and dyed in madder and indigo.

In Sindh even today people have deep reverence for *ajrak*. From birth to marriage, and until death, *ajrak* commemorates every significant event of the life-cycle. This cloth is not only for special occasions, but also has multifarious usage in everyday living, being used and reused till threadbare. *Ajrak* is perhaps amongst the few cloths that has no class barriers; rich and poor use it with the same respect. No colour or pattern distinction is made; the only difference would be the quality of the base cloth.

Spinning and weaving, each was mastered into a craft speciality. One of the greatest accomplishments of the subcontinent was the development of the technology of dyeing and patterning of fabric. This is evident from the discovery of a dyer's workshop at Mohenjodaro (figure 1). *Indigofera tinctoria*, source of the most fabled dye, grew in abundance on the banks of the River Indus. Over time various embroidery techniques were developed in the quest to further embellish the fabrics.

The continuity of textile techniques and technology, along with a common repertoire of timeless motifs carved in stone and wood connect the traditions of the past and the present.

The process of making an *ajrak* is highly complex, comprising 21 different stages. It takes a month to complete a piece of *ajrak*, and this is the reason why craftsmen work on 40 pieces at a time. The artisan works in total harmony with his environment. The cloth is washed thoroughly in the river or lake at various stages of the process. First, the raw cloth is scoured and steamed in a copper vat through the night. Early in the morning the washers are seen at the banks with twisted bales of cloth at different stages of production. The cloth is then brought back to the workshop and generously soaked in *Eruca sativa* seed oil (*Jambe ka tel*). This oil treatment distinguishes the superior *teli ajrak*. The fabric is then tied in a bundle and left for 15 days so that the oil saturates each fibre.

The cloth is now ready to receive the first printing of the white outline of the pattern (*kiryana*) – the resist paste of lime and *Acacia* gum – followed by printing of the black areas (*kut*). The cloth is then printed with a resist and mordant paste (*kharrh*) comprising gum, flour, Fuller's earth, alum, molasses,

and a number of herbs and spices (figure 3). This helps protect the printed areas against the indigo dye. Once the *kharrh* is dry the master dyer dips the cloth in an earthenware vat for the first indigo dye. The dyed fabric is taken to a river and submerged in water (*vicharrh*) early in the morning before being dipped in alizarin dye in a copper vat till the red becomes deep.

Camel dung (*gissi*) is used to remove the excess tanning from the ground and make the white clear and brilliant. *Ajraks* are spread on the river bank where water is sprinkled on them by the artisans intermittently (*tapai*) as they dry (figure 4). This helps the colours to mature while the sun bleaches out the white parts. The *kharrh* mixture is printed yet once more and the *ajrak*s go through another indigo dip before going in for a final wash. The result is the precious, jewel-like *ajrak*.

There has been a steady decline in the number of *ajrak* workshops, from the thousands in the last century to a few dozen at present, but the labour-intensive process has persisted for well over a millennium. Today cheap imitations of *ajrak* are made by screen printing the traditional patterns. Still, the original hand-block printed *ajrak* continues to attract discerning users (figure 5).

Quilts for the Sufis

The tradition of *ralli* or quilt making is common in Sindh, Baluchistan, and in the Cholistan desert. The *ralli* is often associated with the Sufis; it signifies their concept of humility, by the reuse of old cloth. The devotees who throng to Bhit Shah, the hometown of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, the Sufi saint revered all over Sindh, to pay homage at his shrine, carry rolled bundles of *rallis* (quilts) from their homes to spread out in the courtyard as bedding (figure 7).

The word *ralli* comes from the word *ralanna,* which means to mix and connect. The *ralli* is made by laying multiple layers of cloth, one upon the other, and the process

5

Detail of *wal wali* (creeper design) *ajrak*, made at Bhit Shah. Photograph: Irfan Naqi.

6

Detail of carved sandstone from the Makli tombs. 125,000 Sufi saints are said to be buried there. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

7

A spread of *rallis*, a common sight at the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1689–1752) at Bhit Shah. Pilgrims carry their *rallis*, as they traverse many miles to pay homage to the Sufi saint. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

begins with a ritual, a gathering of family members and friends to contribute old and new fabrics, aromatic herbs, cloves and dried cardamoms, all of which go into its making. The lowest layer consists of a dark sheet or an old *ajrak*, with the appliqué or patchwork making amazing geometrical patterns on the topmost layer. These layers of old fabric are sewn together by a simple running stitch, *kunh*. Old *ralli* and narrower strips are used as dowry bags, saddlecloths, hammocks, etc.

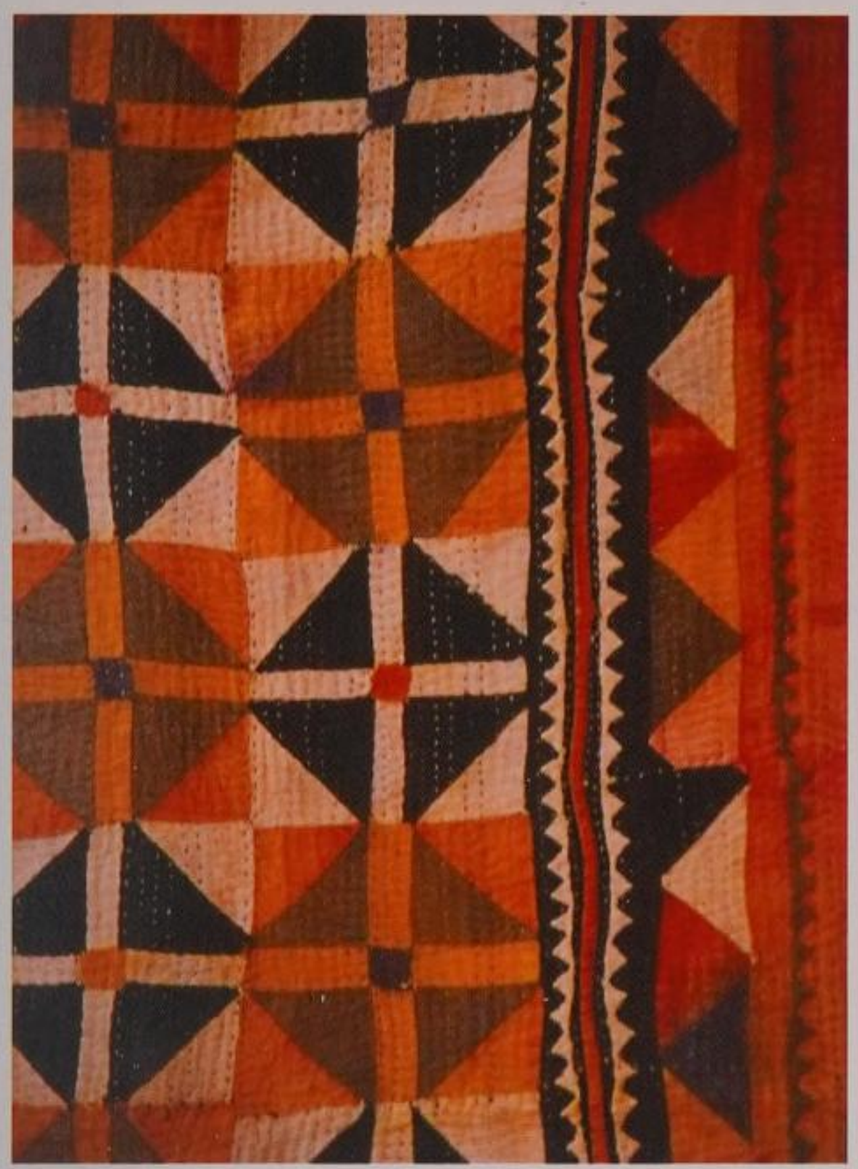
Most commonly used as a bedspread, the *ralli* can also be used as a cushion cover, pillow case, prayer mat (*musallah*), or floor covering. Almost every rural household in Sindh contains a collection of *rallis*, usually made by the members of the family for everyday use. In Sindh, two different types of *ralli* are produced, the *tuk* (piece) *ralli* and the *kata* (cut) *ralli*.

The *tuk ralli* is made by sewing together small pieces of multicoloured cloth to create different designs, much like patchwork (figure 8). The patterns are usually bold and geometric, giving a simple but stunning effect. The craftswomen produce the *tuk ralli* in their homes, with families working independently of each other. However, members of one family usually work together in sewing the *ralli*.

Traditionally, *ralli* was only made from cotton. However, around 15 years ago the trend changed and the demand for cotton tapered off, being replaced by cheap polyester silk. As a result, most *rallis* produced today are synthetic.

The *kata ralli* is an appliqué, where pieces of coloured cloth are folded and cut into various patterns and then stitched onto a white base cloth, forming the upper part (*teha*) of the *ralli*. The lower part (*purh*) of the *ralli* is then attached to the *teha* by a fine running stitch (*tropa*).

The *ralli* is also used by travelling faqirs and snake-charmers. In Tando Bagho, a small town of Badin district in Sindh, under a temporary shed with partitions of *rallis*, embroidered cloth, and piled metal trunks, live small nomadic communities of Sami fakirs. People come to them to have their fortune (*faal nama*) read; they otherwise wander, carrying their belongings in *jholis* (sacks) made with fine, colourful contrasting stitches. The women embroider on patched pieces of quilted recycled cloth, with several threads at the same time. Combining running or darning stitch, back stitch, and interlacing stitches, exquisite patterns are



created (figure 9). Their intricate embroidery echoes the markings of windswept sand, flowers of the desert, and geometric patterns.

The *Khes* of Royal Khairpur

Khairpur, located in Upper Sindh, is a place of great historical significance in the subcontinent. Dating back to 5000 BCE, the ancient Kot Diji is among the oldest civilizations known to man. The advent of Muslim invaders in the 8th century brought Islam to this area. As a result, it has been exposed to myriad influences all of which have contributed in shaping its unique and distinctive character. The Talpur Mirs established Khairpur as an independent state in the 18th century and under their rule spanning over 200 years, the arts and crafts flourished. Khairpur became a hub of artistic activity, and during this period produced some of the finest crafts, a few of which are still practised.

When Sindh was annexed by Sir Charles Napier in 1843, Khairpur state was allowed to retain its independence as a reward for its ruler Mir Ali Murad, who had helped the British to flourish in Sindh. Khairpur thus became a "princely state" allied to the British East India Company and the Crown. The state minted and used its own coins till 1903, after which they were discontinued and replaced by British coins.

While one of the most striking features of Khairpur is the endless rows of date palms (the seeds of which came with the Muslim invaders) stretching as far as the eye can see, indigo was also extensively cultivated and exported. Khairpur state was the fourth largest exporter of indigo in the world.

The industry of handloom weaving in Khairpur produced a particular type of textile called *khes*, which gained fame for its quality (figure 12). *Khes*, a traditional patterned bedspread commonly used till today in homes across the subcontinent, is a double-weave cloth, intricately woven with cotton or silk yarn. It was an acclaimed textile export item in the Mughal period and became popular in England. *Khes* was once noted for its vegetable dyed colours and the cochineal *khes* was among the most expensive. Combinations of garish chemical colours have now replaced the more muted natural colours.

8 *left*

Detail of *tuk ralli*, Khairpur, late 20th century. Collection and photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

9

Detail of a *ralli* for a bag for dowry, embroidered by Sami fakirs, Badin district. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

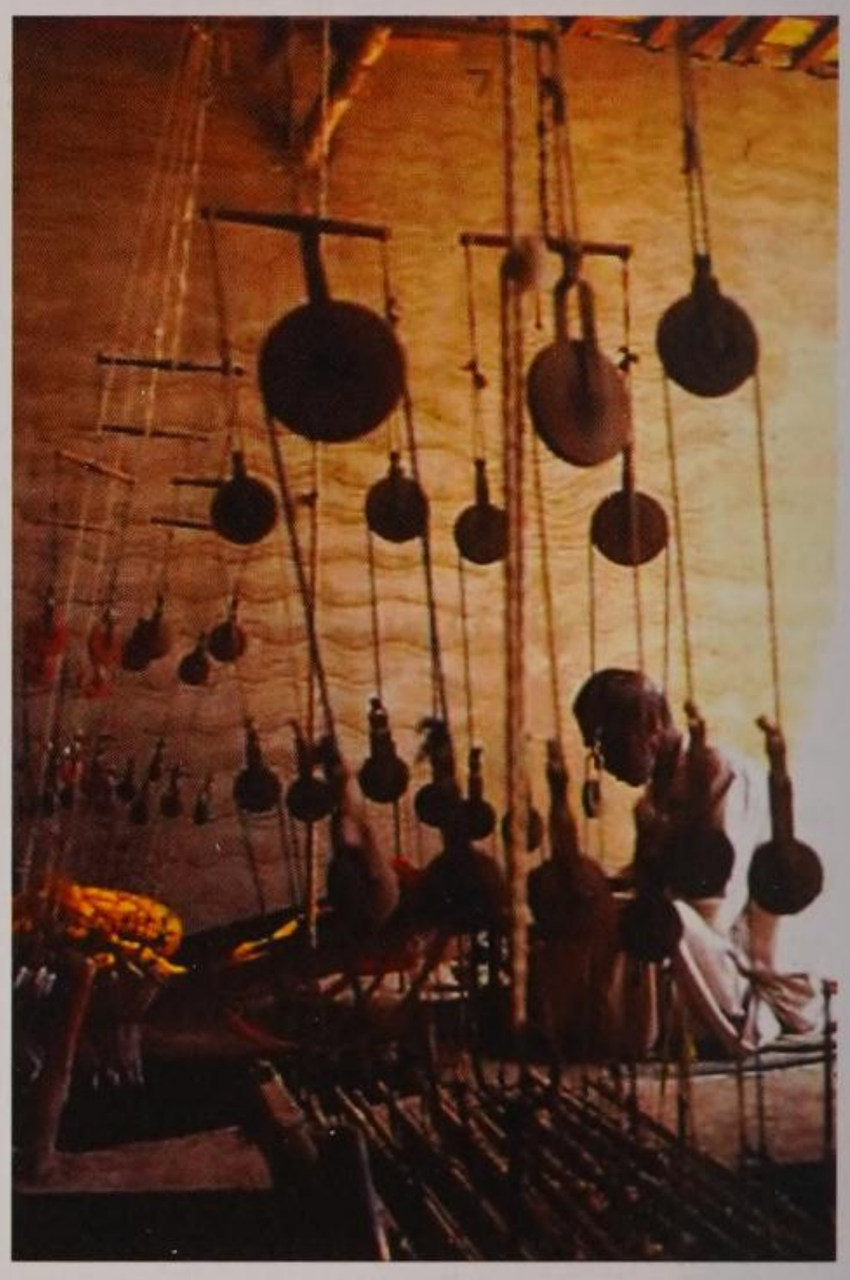
10

Khes weaving at Riyadat Ali's workshop, Ambh village, Khairpur. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

Today the finest *khes* is produced by the weavers of Ambh village who belong to the Mallah caste (figure 10). The skill of *khes* weaving has been passed down over several generations of craftsmen. All production takes place in the home, with families working independently of each other. The houses of the craftsmen are usually located behind their workshops, where amongst multitudes of children, the common yard is shared with cows, buffaloes, donkeys, and chickens. The workshops are simple thatched sheds with good ventilation. Each workshop houses up to four pit-looms. Both men and women weave the *khes*, although at present there are more men than women engaged in production. Men are responsible for the making of the warp, while women make the weft spindles. Two lengths of *khes* are woven on the traditional pit-loom; these are sewn together by hand. Each length is 3 metres, with a width of about 85 cm.

The Legendary *Susi* of Sindh

Susi is a finely woven, thin, striped cotton and silk cloth. It was once the most



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Ustad Qamaruddin weaving *susi* on a pit-loom, Nusserpur. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

12
Detail of a cotton *khes*, Khairpur. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

ubiquitous of the textiles of Sindh. The 1907 *Gazetteer of Sind* records thus: "The trouser material known as Susi occupies 400 looms in Nusserpur and 500 looms in Hala, which are important centres of this industry, and 250 in Thatta." Traditionally, the cloth was used by women to make their *shalwar*s (baggy pants) by joining widths.

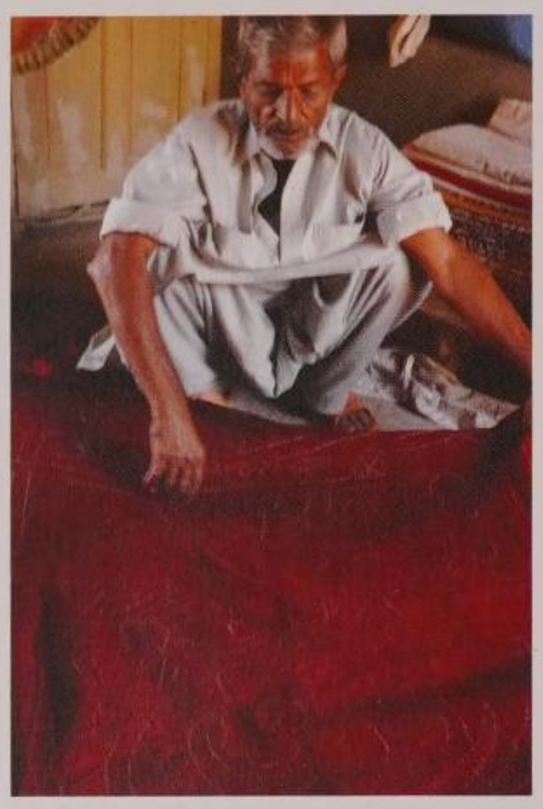
Susi weaving that was a thriving cottage industry a century ago is now reduced to three elderly master-craftsmen who are struggling to keep the art form alive. There are no more handloom *susi* weavers left in Hala or Thatta; in Hala, *susi* is now mostly produced on power-looms. In Nusserpur, efforts are being made to revive natural dyed *susi* as part of a project initiated by KOEL, a workshop that has pioneered the revival of handblock printed fabrics (figure 11).

Bandhano – Tie-and-Dye of Mitthi

As the women wander in the desert, tiny white dots glint on their madder-dyed *bandhano* skirts. The name for this ancient technique of cloth patterning is derived from *bandhna* which means "to tie". Using a blocked pattern as a guideline, the women pinch a tiny piece of cloth and wind threads around it. The tied threads form a resist when the cloth is dipped in dye. Tie-and-dyed textiles are sometimes further embellished with *badla* work, a starry effect created with thin, beaten-metal strips (figure 13).

Nathuram Khattri, 68 years old, gaunt but animated, literally lives and breathes textiles (figure 14). He is an icon in Mitthi, a village of Tharparkar district. Since the age of 15, he has been involved in this work. He belongs to the Khattri (dyer) community. Today the sole torchbearer of the tradition, Nathuram reminisces that a few decades ago, Mitthi boasted over 500 families involved in this activity. Nathuram's active workshop is like an artist's studio: Men printing beautiful old designs with small wooden blocks on cloth brought by women for *chapai* (printing); women deftly tying little

13
Bandhano embellished with *badla* on a silk *khombi* (bride's shawl), mid-20th century. Collection of Noorjehan Bilgrami. Photograph: Irfan Naqi.



14

Nathuram, from the Khattri dyer's community, reminisces on the time when the town of Mitthi had over 500 dyers. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

points in the fabric; vats with dyes; lengths of indigo- and alizarin-dyed *bandhano* pieces stretched in nearby open yards. Sadly, he now uses chemical dyes, despite knowing all about natural dyes. Piles of deep red and blue traditional *malir*s (shawls worn by Meghwar men at their wedding) and voluminous *ghagra*s (skirts that are worn by women of both the Muslim and Hindu communities) await customers.

Kundi ka Kam – Aari Embroidery

In Sindh, the renowned *kundi ka kam* (hook-work) is used for embroidering *topi*s (caps). In Kandhkot especially, the men embroider exquisitely fine designs that are inset with spangles or tiny mirrors, using an *aari* (awl) (figure 15).

The awl is also used on leather as on cloth, to decorate surfaces of shoes, saddles, etc. (figure 16). For such embroidery (*karhai*) there is no outline, no drawing, nor is any marking made; the craftsman designs from his vast repertoire. The leather from the hide of a cow is preferred for embroidery, whilst for the soles of shoes, buffalo hide is considered suitable.

Geometric *Farasi* from Bagheli

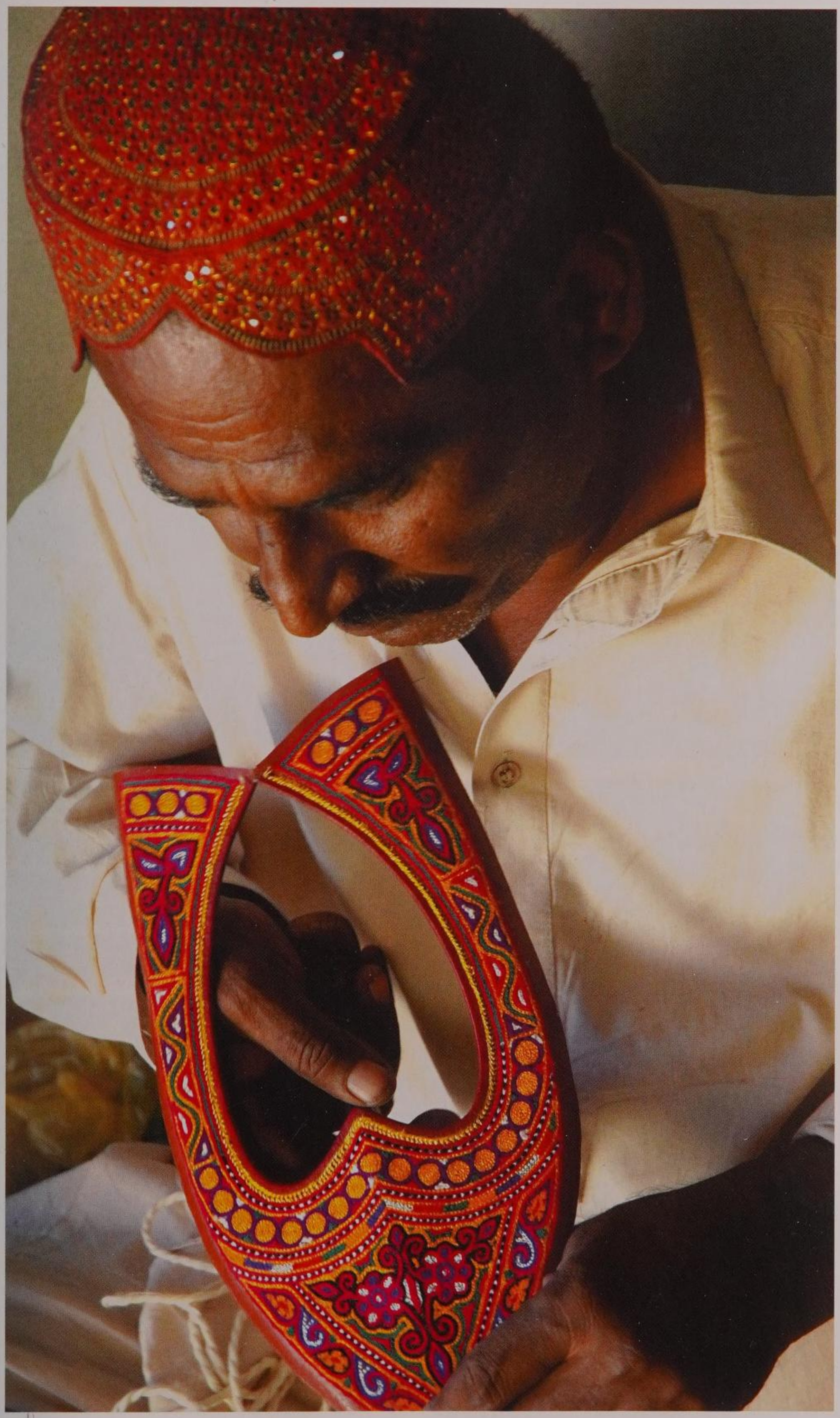
Bagheli in Badin district, now a small village, is what is left of an ancient town. The women of the village wear striking, vibrant colours and look spectacular, with their erect carriage and large gold *nath,* or nose-ring. Bibi Haleema and Bibi Hajjani of the Maheri caste, like other women of Bagheli, work as a pair to weave intricate geometric patterns on *farasi*s (rugs) (figures 17 and 18).

Motifs and Colours of the Desert

There are some spectacular burial sites in Sindh. One of these is Makli, near Thatta, probably the largest necropolis in the East, dating between the 11th and 19th centuries. The nearby Chaukhandi tombs are like a conglomeration of gold, jewelled sculptures in the stark desert. Intricately carved on slabs of stone, to

15

A cap being embroidered, using an awl, Kandhkot. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.



16

Khan Chand embroiders *khussas* (leather slippers), Kandhkot. Also note his embroidered cap. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

17

Maheri women weaving a *farasi*, Maulvi Haji Ali Mohammad Maheri village, Badin district. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

18

Detail of a *farasi* rug, Bagheli village, Badin district. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

a depth of three layers are patterns that reflect Buddhist, Hindu, and Central Asian influences. These incredible carvings provide many of the motifs in the design repertoire of other traditional crafts of Sindh (figure 6).

The *guj* is a wedding shirt with thickly encrusted embroidery, typical to Thano Bula Khan. It is difficult to see the background cloth because of the heavy intricate silk and cotton embroidery with small mirrors set in. It is said that on the birth of a daughter, the mother makes the first stitch on her *guj* and it is then worked on by other family members till the time of the daughter's marriage. Sadly, the mellow colours of natural dyes have now been replaced by garish synthetic colours.

Adjoining the border with Rajasthan in India is the vast desert of Tharparkar, where the dust rises to blur the vision; but through the dust, the most scintillating colours conceivable can be discerned. Stylized images of peacocks (symbolizing the bridegroom), sand dunes, flamboyant red, orange, yellow, and white flowers of *Roherro – Tecomella undulata* (symbolizing fertility) are dramatically embroidered on the dresses of the region (figures 20 and 21). The cloth becomes the vehicle for expressing colour and representing nature in the otherwise monotonous landscape.

The caked, textured mud courtyards, red with strewn drying chillies, echo the red of the tie-dyed or block-printed voluminous *parrha* (skirt), worn with an embroidered, backless *guj*. The graceful ensemble is complete when worn with an embroidered *odhni* or *abochni*, which covers the back and the head (figure 19).

19
Embroidered *abochni* (women's head covering), Suthar community, mid-20th century. Collection of Noorjehan Bilgrami. Photograph: Irfan Naqi.

The Significance of Cloth

Cloth has always held a special place in our part of the world. The story of cloth originates from the earth and the green fields – the fields where the women picked the

20 and 21

Roherro (Tecomella undulata), flamboyant red-orange flowers of the Thar desert inspire embroidery. Photographs: Jamshyd Masood.

cotton from the plant. They spun the yarn in their courtyards under the sky. This activity connected the community, was shared with neighbours and extended families – from the very young to the elders and widows. The yarn was dyed and then woven on looms by both men and women. The cloth was sometimes sent to be patterned by the printers and then the women further embellished it with embroidery. The completed textile became part of their lives, invaluable and treasured through generations. It had personal significance for both maker and user.

The variety, diversity, and wealth of the traditional textiles of the region of Sindh are overwhelming. One vital thread common to all the traditional textiles is

the involvement of the maker, whether it is purely at an individual level, or as part of communal activity, shared by family and friends. Each pair of hands has innocently embroidered or woven a part of its soul in the cloth.

And what is woven from the soul of one immediately touches the heart of the other.

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Picturing Sindh: British Representations

Rosemary Raza

The British came relatively late to Sindh. While their presence began to spread over the subcontinent from the establishment of the East India Company in 1600, it was not till 1843 that the annexation of Sindh brought increasing numbers of British to the area. Sindh thus missed out on the great age of aquatint,[1] which in the late 18th and early 19th centuries produced magnificent records of India, largely by professional and civilian artists, for the admiration of the public at home. It was the military who provided the first records of Sindh, many of them reproduced in the newly popular medium of lithography,[2] and what they depicted reflected their professional status and personal interests.

Through the Military Eye

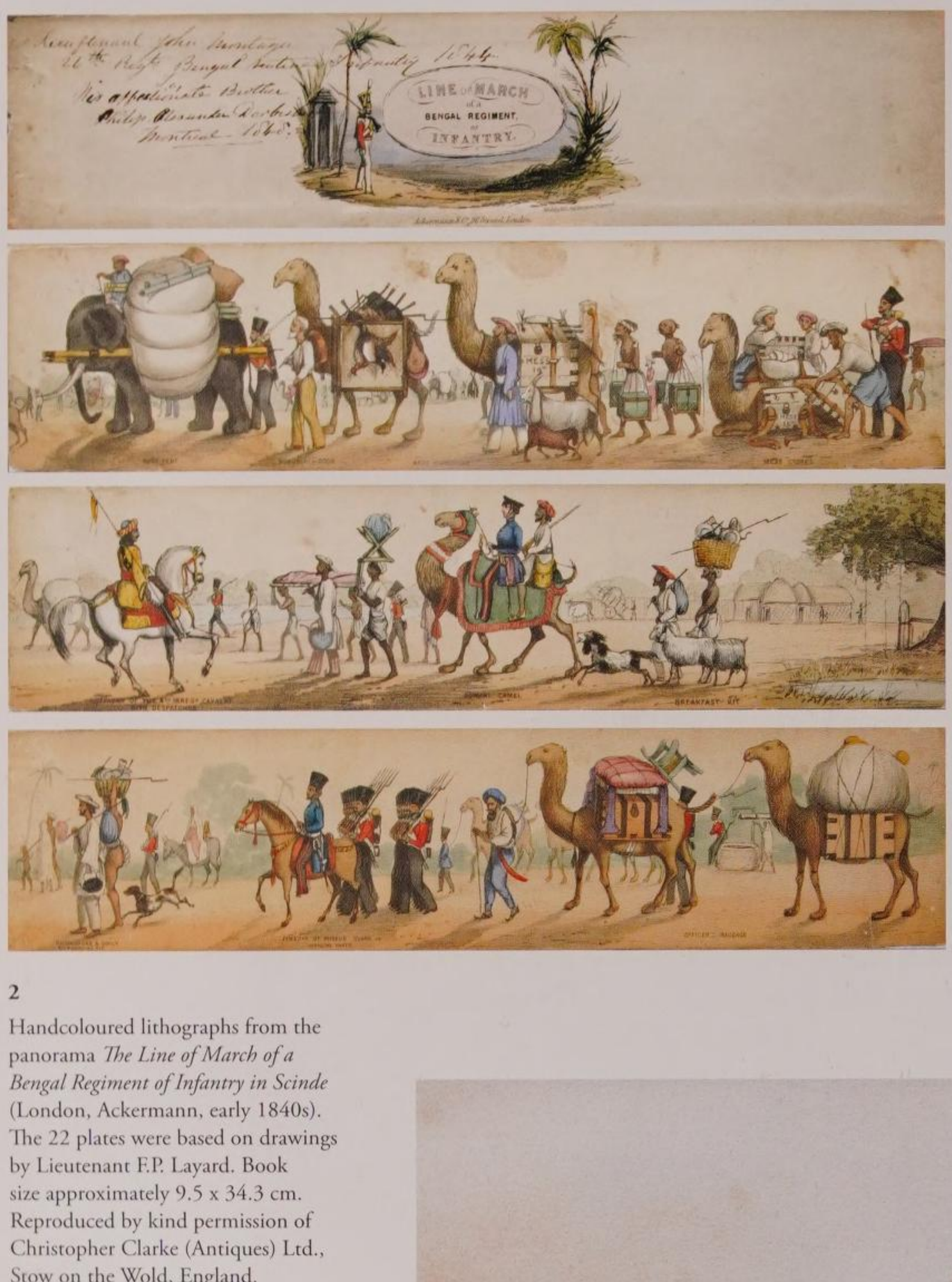
Britain had sporadically attempted to establish commercial links with Sindh from the 17th century, but it was the strategic concerns of Europe which projected her in the early 19th century into the politics of Sindh. The threat posed by Napoleonic France led to an embassy to the Amirs of Sindh in 1808, during which the secretary to the mission, Lieutenant Melville Grindlay, made a number of sketches. One, "A nauch in the palace of the Ameer of Sind", was the basis of a lithograph in *The Oriental Portfolio* of 1838. This gave the British public their first impression of a Sindhi ruler in the company of friends, all of whom Grindlay claimed to have represented accurately, including the lovely dancer, "Misree Khana". His sketches were also used to illustrate Lieutenant Alexander Burnes' account of his expedition up the Indus in 1831–33 to investigate the commercial potential of the river.

However, political concerns continued to dominate interest in Sindh as Britain became increasingly afraid of a renewed foreign threat, this time from the Russians in alliance with Persia. In 1838 the government decided that Afghanistan, its ultimate bastion of defence, could only be secured by forcibly imposing a friendly ruler on the throne. The Army of the Indus was created, one section from Bengal and the second from Bombay, and marched through Sindh en route to Afghanistan – this despite an agreement in 1832 with the Amirs of Sindh banning any passage through their territory for military purposes.

1

"Sindhians. Bermancote near Vikkur on the Indus", Anon., December 8, 1838. Watercolour; 22 x 15.5 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Amateur artists were keen to capture the distinctive appearance of Sindhis, with their striking tall hats.



2

Handcoloured lithographs from the panorama *The Line of March of a Bengal Regiment of Infantry in Scinde* (London, Ackermann, early 1840s). The 22 plates were based on drawings by Lieutenant F.P. Layard. Book size approximately 9.5 x 34.3 cm. Reproduced by kind permission of Christopher Clarke (Antiques) Ltd., Stow on the Wold, England.

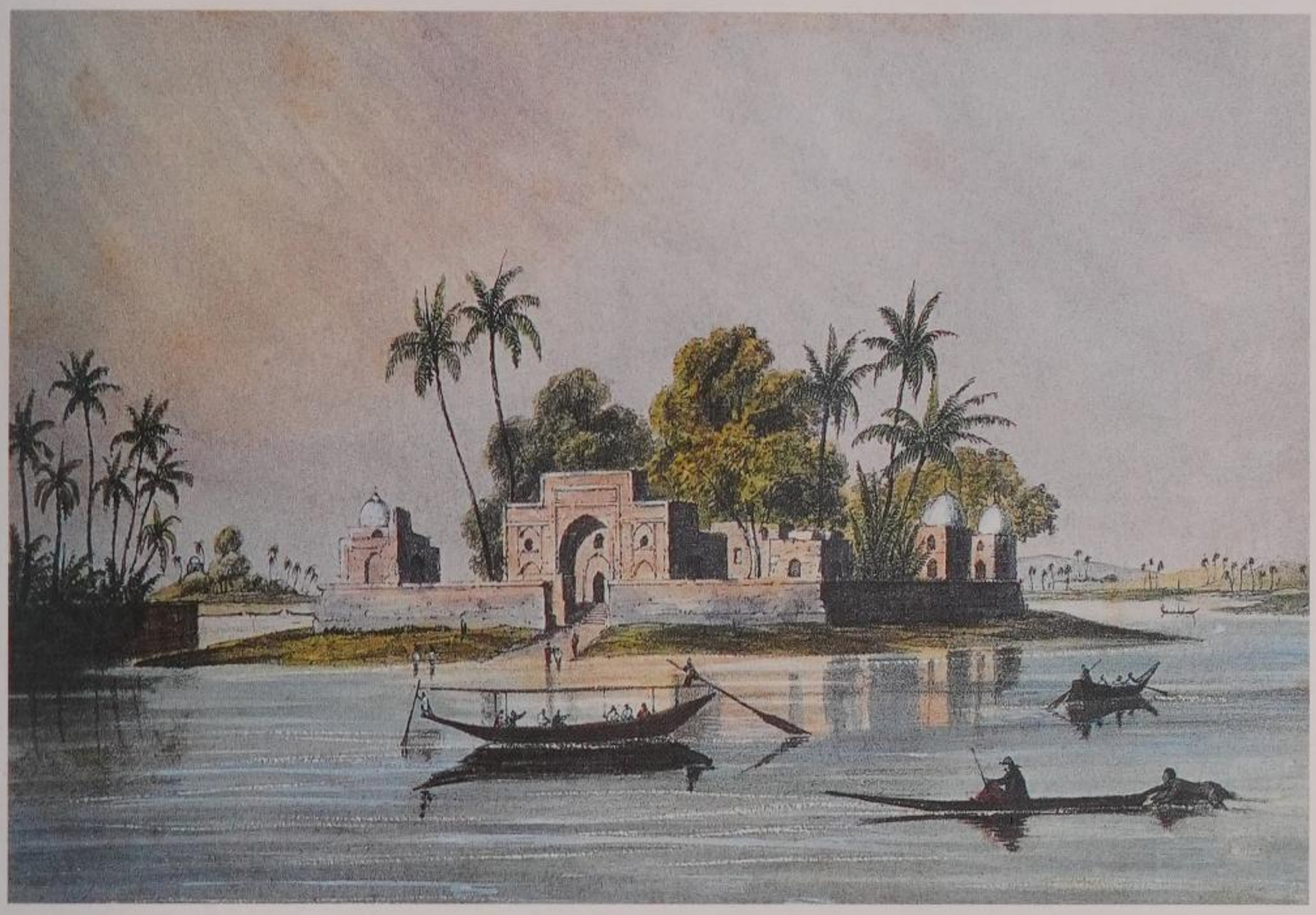
The young officer, Lieutenant Layard, depicted the British army's march through Sindh for the information and entertainment of the public at home.

From this point there was an explosion of illustrations of Sindh. Military officers were taught drawing as part of their professional qualifications, and they filled their sketchbooks with their impressions of the scenes and peoples they encountered. Sindhis in their distinctive tall hats were a favourite subject (figure 1). But there was also a call for published material from the public at home, eager for depictions of the campaigns. One of the most engaging illustrations of the march through Sindh was published by Ackermann. Based on the drawings of Lieutenant Layard, its 22 brightly coloured plates form a panorama of the bustle and organized confusion of a Bengal infantry regiment traversing the arid land (figure 2). On the way, there were many sights and monuments which caught the attention, often reproduced as impressive lithographs, either tinted or handcoloured, in folios illustrating the Afghan campaign as a whole. Both James Atkinson in his *Sketches of Afghaunistan* (1842) and Captain Lockyer Willis Hart in his *Character and Costume of Afghaunistan* (1843) included one

3

"Tomb near Tatta", from Sir Keith Jackson, *Views in Affghaunistaun* (London, 1841). Tinted lithograph; 15.6 x 22.2 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Sketching the monuments of Sindh was a popular pastime for officers with artistic talent.



4

"Hajee Ka Tau, an island just above the fort of Bukkur on the Indus", from Sir Keith Jackson, *Views in Affghaunistaun* (London 1841). Handcoloured lithograph; 15.2 x 22.2 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Picturesque scenes on the Indus were a perennial source of inspiration for amateur artists.

or two scenes in Sindh. However, Sir Keith Jackson was the most captivated by Sindh. His *Views in Affghaunistaun* (1841) included nine plates of Sindh, one depicting a British officer busy sketching a tomb near Thatta (figure 3). Many of the scenes were on the Indus, and the handcoloured version of the lithographs caught the delicate tints of the water and sky (figure 4).

But the jauntiness depicted in the march through Sindh turned to grief in Afghanistan, when the army was decimated in its retreat from Kabul in early 1842. The ignominious defeat turned the spotlight once more on Sindh. Not only did it now assume greater importance as a defence against external aggression, but its subjection was required to redeem national pride. General Charles Napier was brought in to establish a permanent British presence. Bulldozing all opposition, he achieved his aim at the battle of Miani in February 1843; annexation followed the next month. For the next four years, General Napier remained in Sindh as Governor with the army in charge. Throughout the 1840s military artists largely dictated what the public saw of Sindh.

Some representations celebrated the victor and the scenes of his triumph, like the coloured lithograph after Captain Sir Augustine Fitzgerald, which depicted Hyderabad with General Napier and his escort in the foreground (figure 5). Lieutenant William Edwards produced one of the finest records of the time, *Sketches in Scinde*, which appeared in 1846 as both tinted and handcoloured lithographs, and were dedicated to General Napier. Half of the plates were views of Hyderabad, the presence of British soldiers establishing the reality of recent history. But, like most officers, he was interested in far more than British success and military matters: the other half of the plates represented picturesque monuments and scenes, like the entrance to the town of Sehwan (figure 6).

Several of the officers posted to Sindh wrote about their experience, giving the reading public a firsthand account of events and a picture of an area largely unknown in Europe. One of the most interesting was by Thomas Postans of the Bombay Army, who published his *Personal Observations on Sindh* in 1843. He was an enthusiastic artist, and

enlivened his work with his own sketches (figure 7). Those who lacked the talent to illustrate their accounts often fell back on the sketches of brother officers. Richard Kennedy, an army doctor, used drawings by Lieutenant Creed and Captain Haines in his *Narrative of the Campaign of the Army of the Indus* (1840). The phenomenally gifted Richard Burton, one of whose few missing talents was drawing, again turned to the work of an officer, Lieutenant McMullin, for the tinted lithographs to illustrate his *Falconry in the Valley of the Indus* (1852).

However, the days of military rule in Sindh were numbered. The annexation of Sindh, which Napier himself admitted was a piece of "rascality", caused outrage in many quarters, including the army, in both India and Britain. The Calcutta artist Colesworthy Grant used the power of his pencil to draw attention to the injustice done to the Amirs. In his series *Sketches of Oriental Heads* (1850) he included four plates of the Amirs, and in the introduction to the collection gave the chief Amir, Nasir Khan, the chance to set out his side of the sorry story.

Enter the Civilians

It was now the turn of civilians to administer Sindh (figure 8). One of the original grounds for the removal of the Amirs was their authoritarian rule and failure to

5

Lithograph after "A view of Hydrabad [sic] in Scinde. Sir Charles Napier in the foreground followed by his escort of Scinde Horse. Drawn on the spot by Captain Fitzgerald" (London, c. 1850). Handcoloured lithograph; 35.8 x 49.5 cm. Reproduced by permission of the British Library (P199).

Artists like Captain Sir Augustine Fitzgerald recorded the British military occupation of Sindh.

6

"Entrance to the town of Schewan [sic], on the side of Lal Shabaz's tomb", from Lieutenant William Edwards, *Sketches in Scinde* (London, 1846). Handcoloured lithograph; 27 x 37.5 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Lieutenant Edwards' illustration of the entrance to the town of Sehwan reflected widespread interest in the architecture and monuments of Sindh.

7

"Raising water from the Indus", by Captain Thomas Postans, reproduced in black and white in his *Personal Observations on Sindh* (London, 1843). Original sketch in pencil, pen and ink wash, watercolour, oil, and pastel; 17.5 x 23.8 cm. Reproduced by permission of the British Library (WD485, f.7v).

Military artists like Lieutenant Postans made quick sketches of interesting customs and practices – like this camel raising water from the Indus – some of which were then used to illustrate books on Sindh.

concern themselves with the economic and social wellbeing of their people. It was up to the British to prove they could do better. Sindh was brought under the administration of the Bombay Presidency, and Bartle Frere was appointed commissioner in 1851 to initiate a programme of reform.

A man of enormous drive and enthusiasm, Frere set Sindh on the path it was to follow during the years of British administration. The development of the infrastructure was of prime importance. Roads and bridges were built, and the port of Karachi developed. Although early hopes for the commercial potential of the Indus were dashed by the turbulence of the river, the railway built from Karachi to Kotri, which by 1878 linked with the Punjab, meant that Karachi became the outlet for a vast area. The development of agriculture in Sindh was heavily dependent on the improvement of the canal system, a task which was early regarded as vital but took decades to complete. The opening in 1932 of the Sukkur Barrage, then the largest in the world, vastly improved the potential of Sindh. Its economy and confidence were given a huge boost, underpinning the establishment of Sindh as an independent province in 1936. Karachi by then reflected the wealth and status it had acquired. Frere Hall (see article on Karachi, figure 5), built in 1865, was an early forerunner

8

"Two camels with Sindhi riders with a European seated behind one", by Henry Ainslie, 1852. Watercolour; 25.5 x 35 cm. Reproduced by permission of the British Library (WD2086).

From the early 1850s Sindh was brought under the administration of the Bombay Presidency, and civilian travellers provided a growing record of Sindh.

in a succession of municipal, commercial, educational, and domestic buildings which spread out from the core of the original mudwalled fishing village. Built in golden stone, with a salute to classical European style, they gave the city a prosperous and solid charm. The inhabitants of Sindh had profited from British administration in other ways too. Medical care and education were a priority from the earliest days. The first English-medium government school opened in Karachi in 1853, while the adaptation of the Arabic script to accommodate written Sindhi facilitated its use in vernacular education.

Besides the administrators entrusted with managing the province and developing its infrastructure, large numbers of other civilians and their families followed in their wake: bankers, lawyers, traders, teachers, missionaries, doctors. Many with artistic talent continued as their military predecessors had done to record in pencil, watercolour, and oils what they saw of interest around them, which was largely – minus the military element – the same: people with their distinctive clothing and occupations, the monuments at Thatta and Hyderabad, and topographical scenes (figure 9), particularly at picturesque points on the Indus. There were, however, few reproductions of such work, and it was new technology that revealed Sindh to succeeding generations of the public in Britain.

New Technology

Photography, which was introduced in India in the early 1840s, played a huge role in the visual representation of the subcontinent.[3] One of its most enthusiastic

and talented exponents was Lieutenant Henry Tanner, who was posted in Karachi from the 1850s.

His principal interest was to record the people of Sindh. The remarkable photographs which he took in the early 1860s were reproduced for the public in a magnificent six-volume series of photographic illustrations, *The People of India*, which had been inspired by the Governor General, Lord Canning, and his wife, who were themselves keen photographers. The balance of the contents was somewhat arbitrary, depending on the photographs which had been submitted by the amateur photographers. The number and quality of Tanner's photographs ensured that the whole of the sixth volume, published in 1872, was devoted to Sindh. In it he covered almost the entire spectrum of society, from members of the ruling families and tribes to humble craftsmen and traders (figure 10).

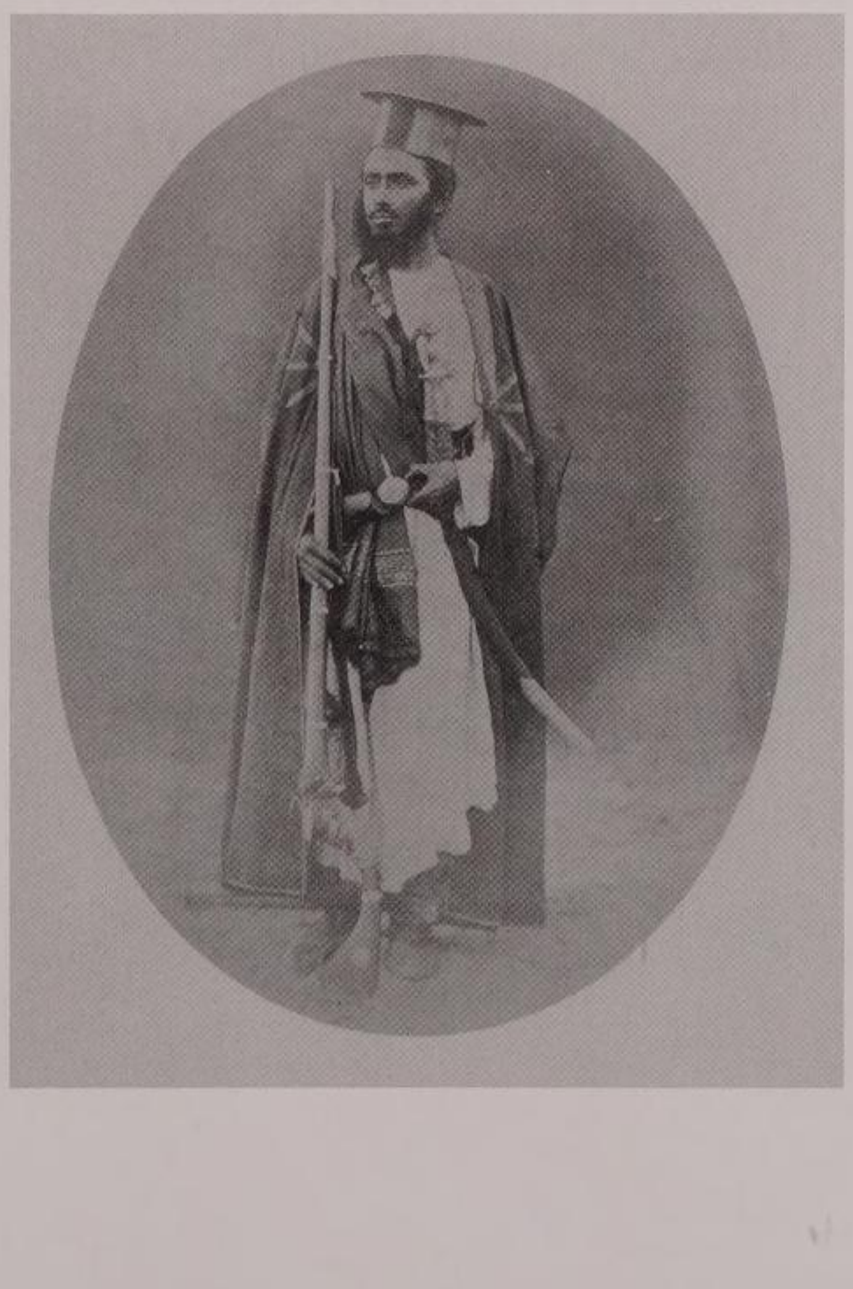
There were many amateurs besides Tanner whose photographs of Sindh remain in private collections and archives such as the British Library. But so popular did photographic records become that the scope of the professional photographer was early recognized. By the 1860s, a firm of photographers, Michie & Company, had been established in Karachi. Frederick Bremner, who became one of the leading professional photographers in India, visited Karachi in the 1880s and '90s to record the city and its administrators. By then, photographs had begun to be reproduced on the printed page. It was, however, the advent of the picture postcard which assured photography of a mass market. In 1894 the postal authorities in Britain permitted private firms to produce picture postcards, and India swiftly followed suit. From the early years of the 20th century postcards became the rage and professional photographers had a new outlet. The postcards the British sent home from Sindh recorded the impressive buildings of Karachi (figure 11), its vibrant commercial life, the achievements of British administration in its schools, hospitals (figure 12), port development, bridges, canal systems (figure 13), as well as local inhabitants and the noted sights of Sindh (figure 14). By now, several local photographers were Indian, and many of the postcards reproduced their work.

However, the innovation which was to have the greatest impact on the British public's perception of Sindh was the introduction of the illustrated weekly, which married pictures with text. *The*

9

"Rural life in Sind", Anon., late 19th century. Oil painting. Formerly in the possession of M. Kennedy, C.S.I. Reproduced by kind permission of Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto.

The unknown artist of this late 19th-century oil painting provides a rare glimpse of rural life in Sindh, which drew less attention than the province's magnificent monuments.



10

Photograph of Sirdar Khan Noomrya, *The People of India. A series of photographic illustrations, with descriptive letterpress, of the races and tribes of Hindustan,* pl. 287 of Vol. 6 (London, 1872). Oval image, max. 16 x 12 cm. Reproduced by permission of the British Library (Cup.410.c.88).

Lieutenant Henry Tanner was an enthusiastic photographer. He admired the "fine and handsome" Baluchi Sirdar Khan Noomrya, "a powerful and athletic young man, with an open, pleasant countenance. His costume is singularly picturesque…."

11

Dayaram Jethmal Sind Art College, Karachi. Printed in England by Raphael Tuck & Sons, and published for the S.J. Co-operative Society, Karachi, c. early 20th century. Postcard image; 8.8 x 14 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

During the second half of the 19th century, Karachi acquired impressive buildings to serve its growing commercial and civic needs (see article on Karachi, figure 2).

Illustrated London News first appeared in May 1842 and with *The Graphic*, which was published from 1869, continued till well into the 20th century to bring to an enthusiastic public illustrated news from home and round the world. For most of the 19th century, woodcuts based on locally produced sketches and photographs were used for illustrations, and it was not till the 1890s that *The Illustrated London News* reproduced photographs. Its founder, Herbert Ingram, was a liberal reformer and the remit of his weekly was wide, extending far beyond current events to reports on cultural, economic, and social issues. From an illustrated article in April 1843 on the battle of Miani, *The Illustrated London News*, and later *The Graphic*, continued to report on Sindh. The developing infrastructure and social and economic advance which justified British rule were illustrated (figures 15 and 16). But there was also considerable interest in the people of Sindh and their culture and history. British colonial life, too, came in for amused and ironic comment (figure 17).

The Culture of Sindh

Sindh was also drawn to the attention of the outside world by increasing interest in the arts and crafts of India. The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London aimed to show outstanding manufactured products from round the world, and India had its own section. Mir Ali Murad of Khairpur had gone to considerable trouble to collect the best that Sindh could offer, and one of the exhibits, an embroidered boot front, was selected for inclusion in the record compiled by Digby Wyatt of the finest objects on display, which were reproduced in magnificent chromolithographed plates in *The Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century* (1851–53) (figure 18). The beauty of the colour combinations was particularly remarked, and the embroidery of Sindh was henceforth collected and featured in many

12

The Civil Hospital, Hyderabad, Sindh. Publisher unknown; printed in Saxony, then the world centre for postcard printing, c. early 20th century. Postcard image; 8 x 14 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Health and education were among the principal concerns of the British administration in Sindh, as a number of handsome buildings throughout the province bore witness.

later exhibitions in Britain and Europe. In India, too, the arts and crafts of Sindh were represented in projects inspired by John Lockwood Kipling and George Birdwood to record and preserve the achievements of the subcontinent. The *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, which began in 1886, contained in 1888 an article on the embroidery of Sindh, illustrated by a chromolithograph of glowing green embroidery from Shikarpur. But Sindh was renowned for other skills, too, and its jewellery, lacquerwork, pottery, and tiles were illustrated in black-and-white engravings in *The Industrial Arts of India*, published by Birdwood in 1880.

Yet while giving the public an impression of Sindhi arts and crafts, such illustrations hardly did justice to the richness of what Sindh had to offer. It was some time before any publication focused exclusively

13

Fuleli Canal, Hyderabad, Sindh. Photograph by R. Jalbhoy, Karachi, c. early 20th century. Postcard image; 7.8 x 14 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Postcards often illustrated British achievements in Sindh, among them the improvement of the canal system which helped develop Sindh's agriculture.

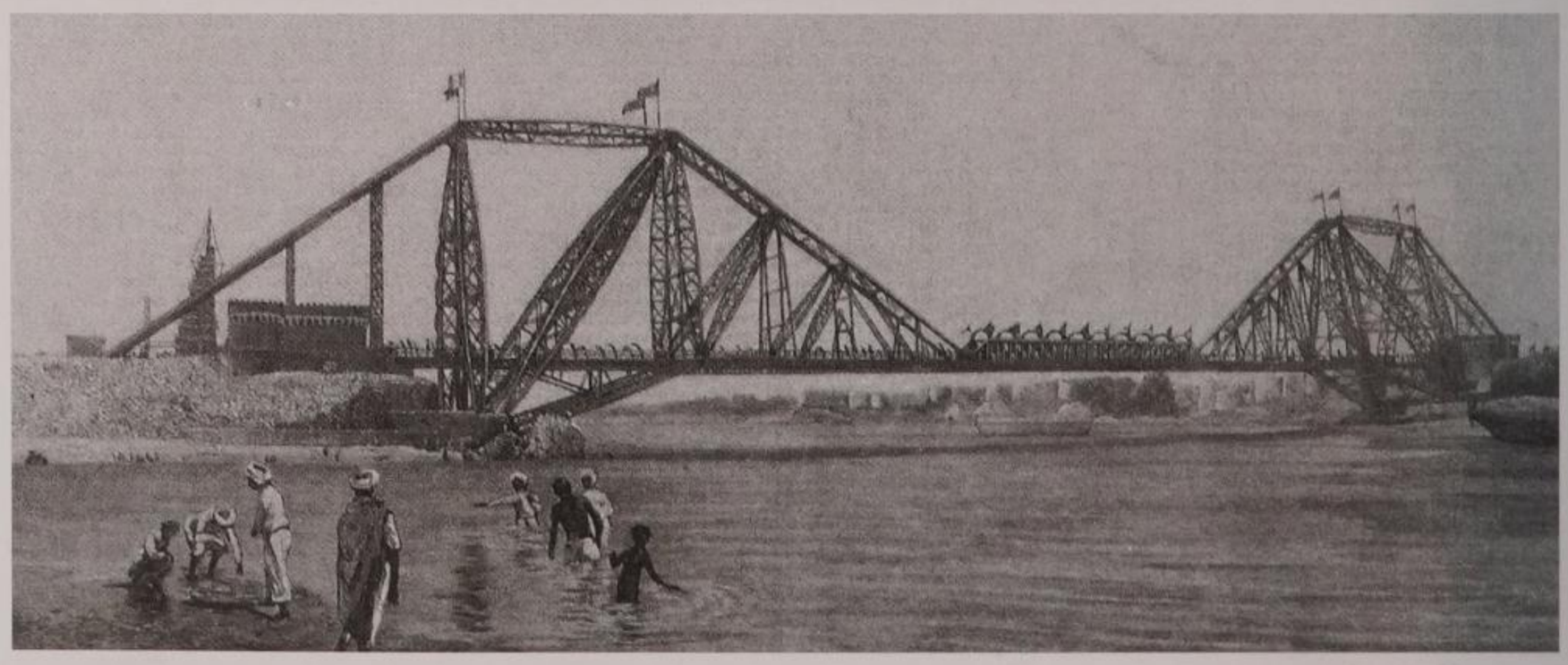
14

Shamaki Fort, Hyderabad, Sindh. Photograph by R. Jalbhoy, Karachi, c. early 20th century. Postcard image; 7.8 x 14 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Professional photography grew from the later 19th century, providing an occupation for Indians such as R. Jalbhoy, who produced a series of postcards, many of which – like this view of Shamaki Fort – reflected the perennial interest in Sindh's monuments.

on the province, and when one appeared it brought into glowing life one of the glories of Sindh, its tilework. From the earliest days, amateur artists had painted the stunning blues of the tile-covered mosques and tombs of Sindh. In 1906 they gained a wider appreciation with the publication of the *Portfolio of Illustrations of Tiles of Sindh*, which was prepared by Henry Cousens, superintendent of archaeology in western India. He hoped that the impressive chromolithographed plates of tiles in Thatta, Hyderabad, Sehwan, and Sukkur would not only make the work better known, but encourage use of the exquisite old designs in modern buildings.

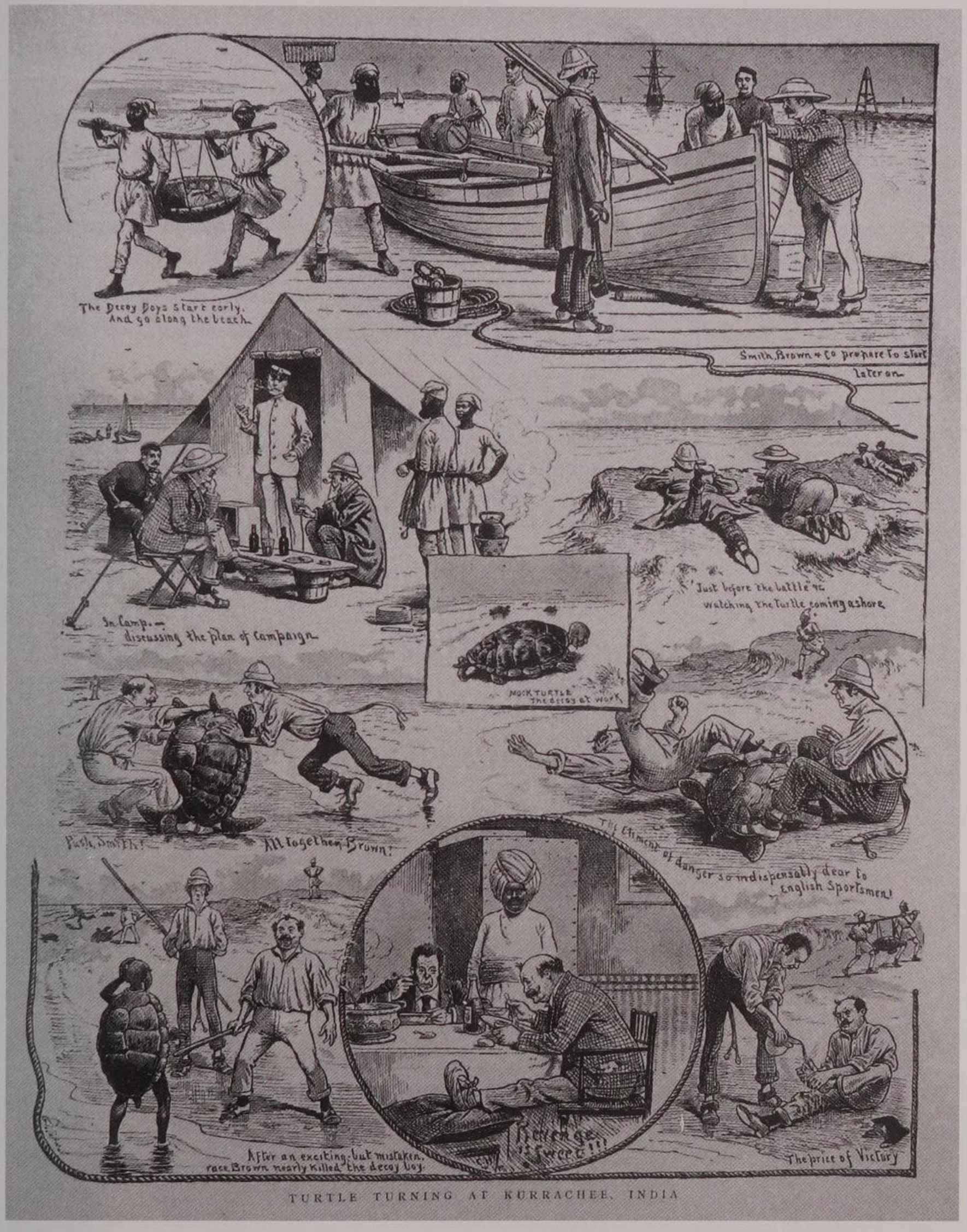
Henry Cousens also played an important part in bringing the archaeology of Sindh to life through illustration. It was early realized that Sindh had an ancient past. In



15 and 16

"Opening of the Lansdowne Bridge over the Indus, at Sukkur, India, by Lord Reay", and "General view of the bridge", *The Graphic*, May 25, 1889. Woodcuts after photographs; 19.8 x 22.8 cm, and 10.2 x 22.8 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

Illustrations in weekly papers such as *The Graphic* celebrated the achievements of the British administration.


The Decoy Boys start early. And go along the beach
Smith, Brown & Co prepare to start later on
In Camp.— discussing the plan of campaign
Just before the battle— watching the Turtle coming ashore
MOCK TURTLE The Decoys at Work
Push, Don't Pull!
All together Brown!
The Element of danger so indispensably dear to English Sportsmen!
After an exciting, but mistaken, race Brown nearly killed the decoy boy.
Revenge is sweet!!!
The price of Victory

TURTLE TURNING AT KURRACHEE, INDIA

17

"Turtle turning at Kurrachee, India", *The Graphic*, August 31, 1889. Woodcut after an original drawing; approx. 29 x 22 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

The colonialists could laugh at themselves, as ironic illustrations often showed.

1854, a civilian administrator, Augustus Bellasis, explored the huge ruined city of Brahmanabad, northeast of Hyderabad. His reports were popularized in *The Illustrated London News* of February 1857 and enlivened with three woodcuts of the drawings he had made of the interesting objects found at the site. Besides this mysterious city, there were relics of other ancient periods, including Buddhist stupas, as well as the magnificent monuments of the more recent Muslim past. Some dry official reports subsequently appeared, but funds were limited and the nature of the terrain made exploration and record difficult. It was not till 1929 that Cousens published his magisterial *The Antiquities of Sindh*, filled with illustrations. Some used the old technique of chromolithography; but the majority of sites were illustrated with black-and-white photographs, which were by now frequently reproduced on the

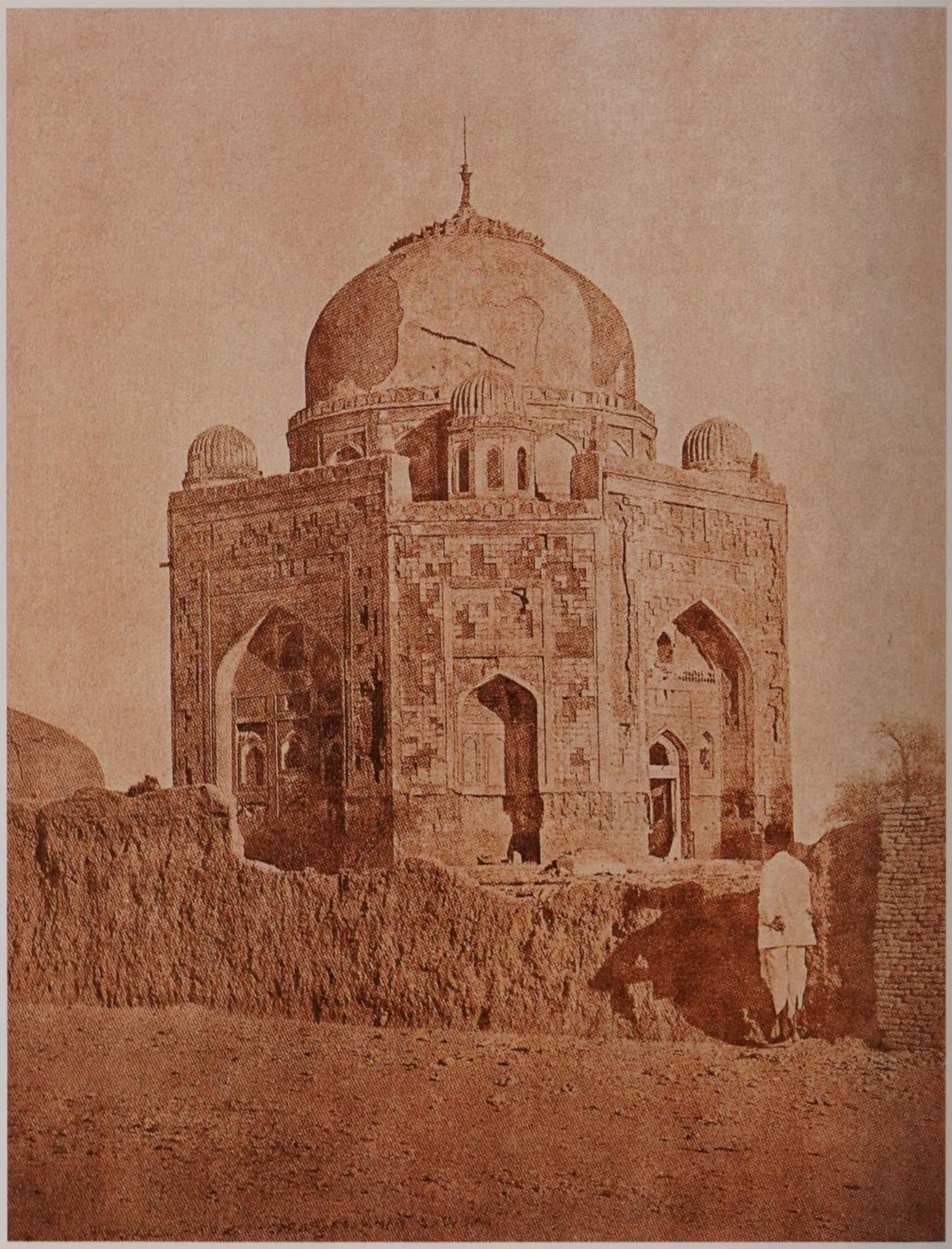
18

"Embroidered boot front. Scindian manufacture. From His Highness Meer Ali Moorad". From M. Digby Wyatt, *The Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century. A series of illustrations of the choicest specimens produced by every nation at the Great Exhibition of works of industry 1851.* Pl. 36, Vol. 1. The plates were issued in a series in 1851–53. This plate was published on February 1, 1852, and was drawn by Dellamotte and chromolithographed by Bedford. Chromolithograph; 34.3 x 24.5 cm. Collection of Dr K. Raza.

Developments in colour reproduction brought wider appreciation of Indian arts and crafts, as illustrated by this design which was chromolithographed along with other "choicest specimens".

printed page (figure 19). Cousens had only briefly touched on Mohenjodaro, the most amazing discovery of Sindh's past, which was being excavated in the 1920s. It was left to Sir John Marshall to edit the account of the excavation, which appeared in 1931 with 164 collotype plates. The photographs, which were amplified with plans and line drawings, illustrated for the first time the antiquity of the Indus civilization.

In 1947 the British left India, and Sindh became a province in the new state of Pakistan. The war years had brought a boost to the economy after the slump of the 1920s and '30s, and with Karachi as its first capital, the country was ready to move forward with the sound infrastructure the British had left behind. Another of their legacies was the visual record of Sindh's ancient and recent past, which



19

"Nabi Khan's tomb at Haidarabad", from Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sindh.* Pl. lxix. (Calcutta, 1929). Photograph; 22.5 x 17 cm.

The increasing reproduction of photographs in books meant that by the early 20th century Sindh's architecture and monuments could be recorded in more accurate detail.

gave shape to the province in the public imagination. It was, however, only a partial shape, and there were areas of the life and culture of Sindh which were not illustrated – inevitably in many cases. It was difficult to represent visually the poetry and music of Sindh, and the saints and Sufis who were such a distinctive feature of its culture. Social custom prevented the record of upper-class ladies in Sindh. Women like Marianne Postans, who wrote about Sindh in the 1840s, found it impossible to meet the wives of the ruling families, and illustration of Sindhi women was restricted – as in the photographs of Tanner – to the lower classes. Moreover, though a widening audience and developing technologies brought Sindh a distinctive face, the reproductive processes available failed to do it full justice. The subtleties of a desert landscape, or the brilliant colours of Sindhi textiles, embroidery, and tilework, only received their full due with the advent of colour photography and its reproduction in books and magazines, which did not become commercially feasible on a large scale till the 1940s.

Nowadays in Sindh there is increasingly little to see of Britain's former involvement. Despite the valiant efforts of the Heritage Foundation, much of the old colonial architecture of Karachi continues to crumble away or is pulled down for development. However, the visual record left by the British is now recognized for its historical and artistic importance. Many of the illustrated accounts of Sindh have been reprinted over the years and recently several major works where the illustrations are of prime importance have been reissued in Karachi, including Edwards' *Sketches in Scinde*, and Cousens' studies of the tilework and antiquities of Sindh. These continue to bear witness to a new audience of the fascination inspired in the colonialists of former days by their temporary home in Sindh.

NOTES

1 An aquatint achieves its effect by shading rather than etched lines. Acid-resistant particles are attached to a copper plate; acid is then applied which eats into the unprotected copper plate, the depth of the subsequent printed tone being dependent on the length of time the acid is left to attack the plate.

2 Lithography, which gained in popularity from the 1820s, is dependent on the principle that oil and water repel each other. A drawing is made on stone with lithographic writing ink, crayon, or chalk to which the printing ink will adhere while being repelled by the water-moistened background.

3 I am indebted to Hugh Ashley Rayner for information about the development of photography in India.

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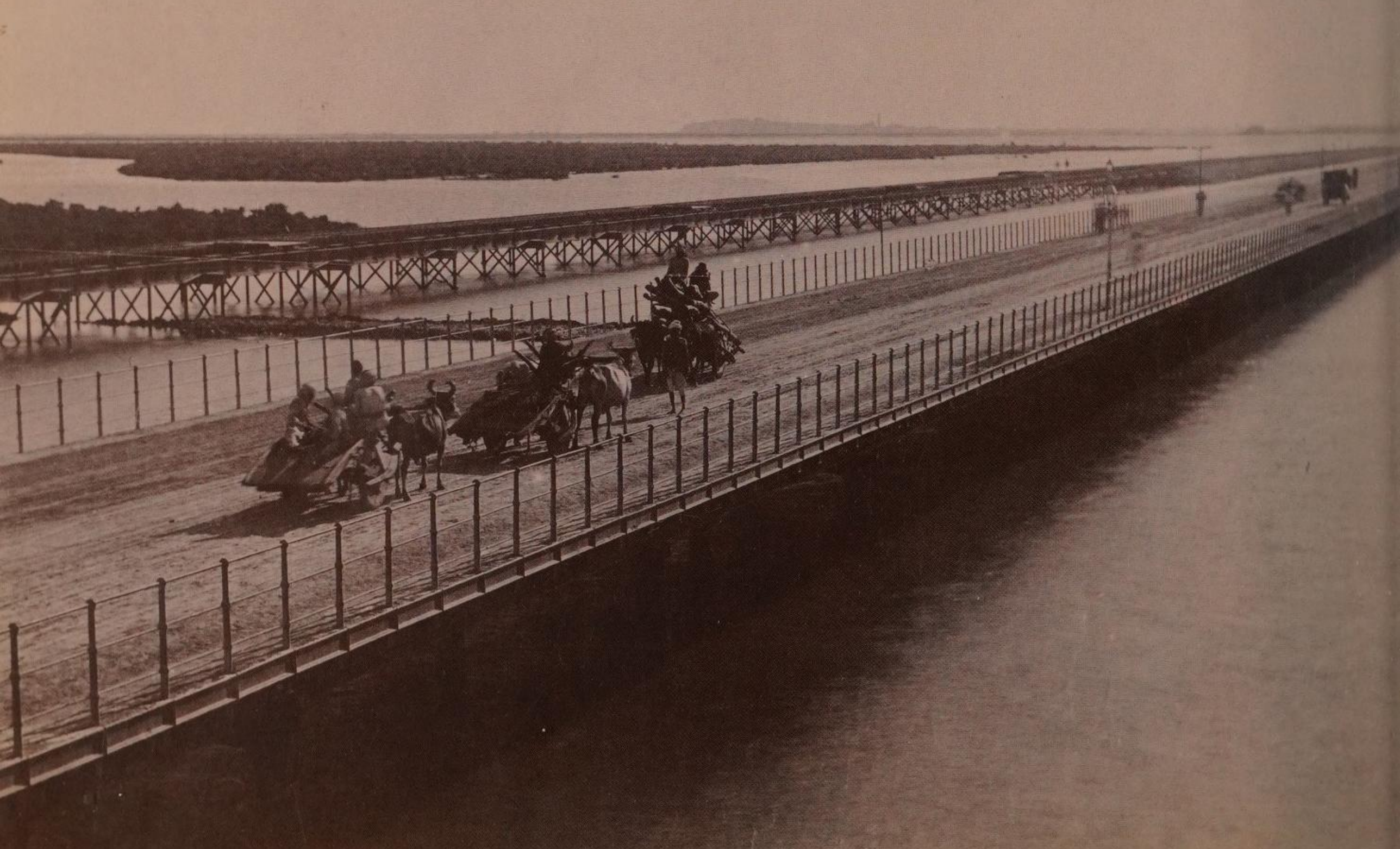
Napier Mole Bridge to Keamari, c. 1900, by an unknown photographer. British Library.



Kalachi, Kurrachee, Karachi: Biography of a Metropolis

Nandita Bhavnani

Kalachi

Around the year 1729, at Kharakbunder, where the Baluchi river Habb meets the Arabian Sea, the local merchants and shipowners found they had a problem. The entrance into the port from the sea was silting up, threatening their flourishing trade with the Persian Gulf, Gujarat, and the Malabar coast. Some of these merchants set out looking for an alternative site: one of them was an enterprising Hindu bania called Bhojoomal, who by the age of 20 had already developed his own widespread business network.

Sixteen miles to the east was a tiny fishing hamlet called Dirbo, which stood next to Kalachi-jo-Kun, the Whirlpool of Kalachi. Although the Lyari river nearby was perennially dry except when it rained, there was abundant sweet-water in the wells dug in its sandy bed. So a mud-and-wood fort was built at Kalachi, with two gates: Kharo Dar to the west, facing the sea, and Mitho Dar to the northeast, facing the river. It was a town of mud houses, with about 14,000 inhabitants, mostly wealthy Hindu merchants living in the heart of it, and the Muslim fishermen and boatmen living outside the mud walls.

Kalachi stood perched on the border between Sindh and Baluchistan, bouncing back and forth between the two, now seized in war, now conceded as payment for a blood feud. Bhojoomal's sons were at the forefront of the port's politics: defending it bravely, later negotiating a truce, and finally handing over the keys of the fort to the Baluch army of the Talpurs.

Around the year 1832, a communal controversy resulted in a group of Muslims abducting Seth Hotchand, Bhojoomal's grandson, and forcibly converting him to Islam. Although Hotchand returned to his family later and performed expiatory rites, he was ultimately obliged to retire to neighbouring Kutch in disgrace. Until now, the Talpurs, having recognized the importance of the trade revenues, had generally patronized and protected the Hindu merchants of Karachi. Now, when they turned a blind eye to this outrage, Hotchand's son Seth Naomal vowed to take revenge.

By this time, Sindh had also taken on increased political significance for the British, who were nervous about Russian designs on Afghanistan. In their less-than-scrupulous dealings with the Talpurs – reneging on their treaties, penalizing them on exaggerated grounds, and ultimately resorting to unwarranted aggression – they were aided by a vengeful Naomal, who supplied them with provisions, beasts of burden, and valuable information.

And so in February 1839, HMS *Wellesley* sailed into "Crotchey Harbour" and immediately proceeded to fire at the fort, quickly pulverizing it to dust. The British later claimed that the fort had sounded a cannon in greeting, which they had misunderstood as hostile, but clearly this unjustified attack was carefully planned to pressure the Talpurs into signing a new treaty with the East India Company. For years later the legend would be told of the thick smoke rising from the smouldering fort, spreading like a dark cloud over the town, turning day into night.

When John Company came ashore, it was Naomal's elder brother Seth Pritamdas who greeted them at the wharf, and took them to his home for refreshments. There was a plain between the walled town and Rambagh, the old Hindu tank, and this is where the British initially chose to pitch their camp. The people of Kalachi, though, stood aloof from the invaders, hostile and uncooperative, and it was only Pritamdas who gave them any initial help.

Kurrachee

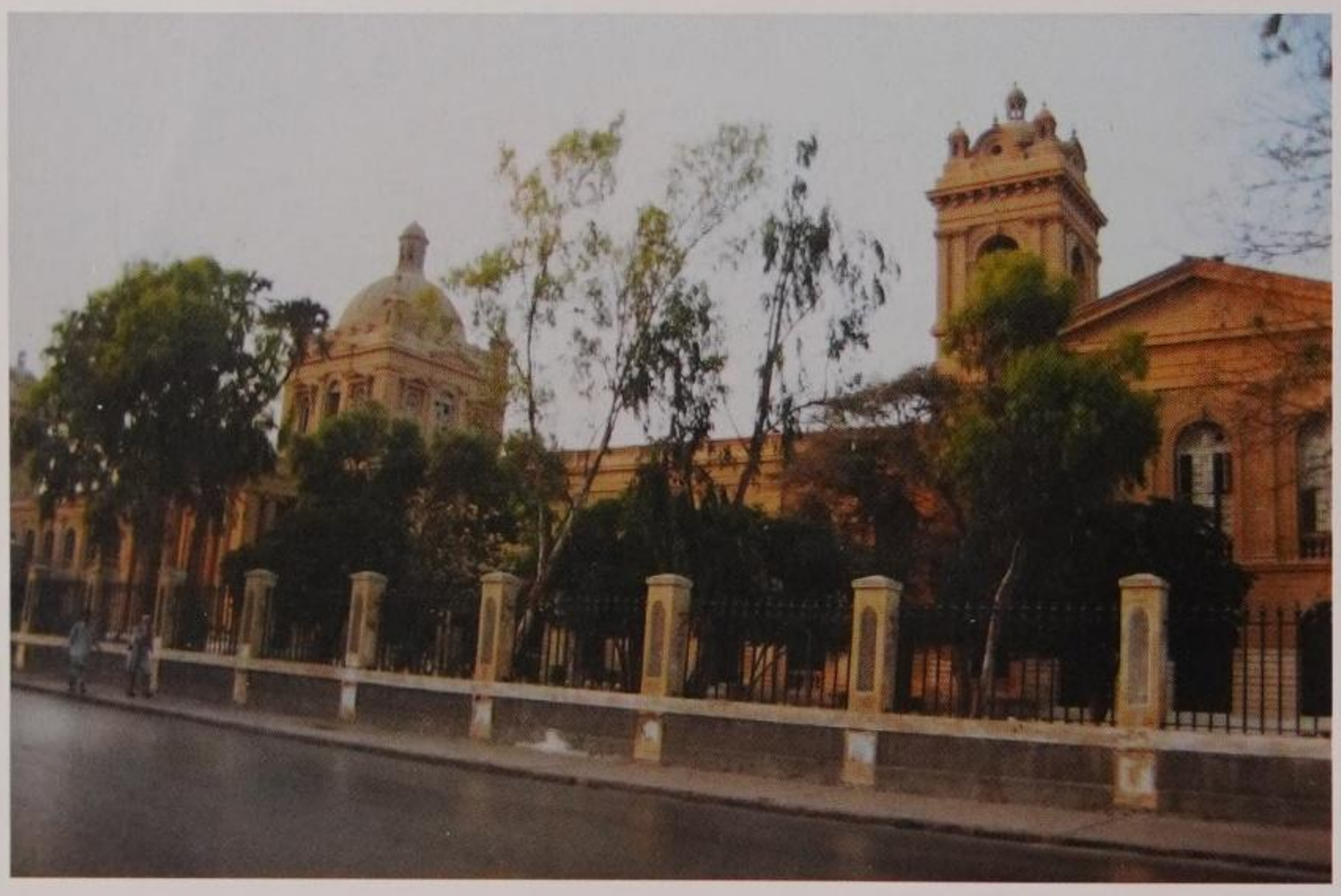
Now Kurrachee became the British gateway to the rest of Sindh, the disembarking *firangi*s piggybacking on fishermen across the marshes till they reached solid land. Adjacent to the indigenous town, they added the tidy Cantonment and the gridlines of Saddar Bazaar, but Talpur soldiers continued to guard the Mitho and Kharo Darwazas. Then, in early 1843, the British in a self-confessed "piece of rascality", conquered Sindh, which was attached a few years later to Bombay Presidency.

After the conquest, Sindh's capital was transferred from Hyderabad to Kurrachee, thus paving the way for the mushrooming of the port city. The British being the first conquerors to distance themselves from the natives, the city came to be divided into Kumpani Bahadur and Native, bisected by Bunder Road, one of the earliest roads which led straight down to the docks. The white town was modern, clean, and spacious, geometrically laid out, with its symbols of power meant to awe: towering church spires and imposing stone buildings (figure 4). The old town remained the same – traditional, crowded, dense, colourful, and messy; only now it was the black town.

In 1851 Sindh was fortunate to have Bartle Frere posted there as Commissioner. During his short tenure of eight years, the energetic and enterprising Frere brought modernity to Sindh: roads and railways, new schools, a printing press, much-needed canals, and an improved revenue settlement. In 1852, he issued the first postage stamp in India, the Scinde District Dawk. He also set about improving the Karachi port and established a municipality, as a result of

2

D.J. Sind Arts College (now known as the D.J. Government Science College). Designed by James Strachan and considered his greatest achievement, it was built between 1887 and 1893. Named after the Sindhi philanthropist Dayaram Jethmal, whose family members contributed towards its cost, the building was constructed in the neoclassical or Italian architectural style. Photograph: Nandita Bhavnani.



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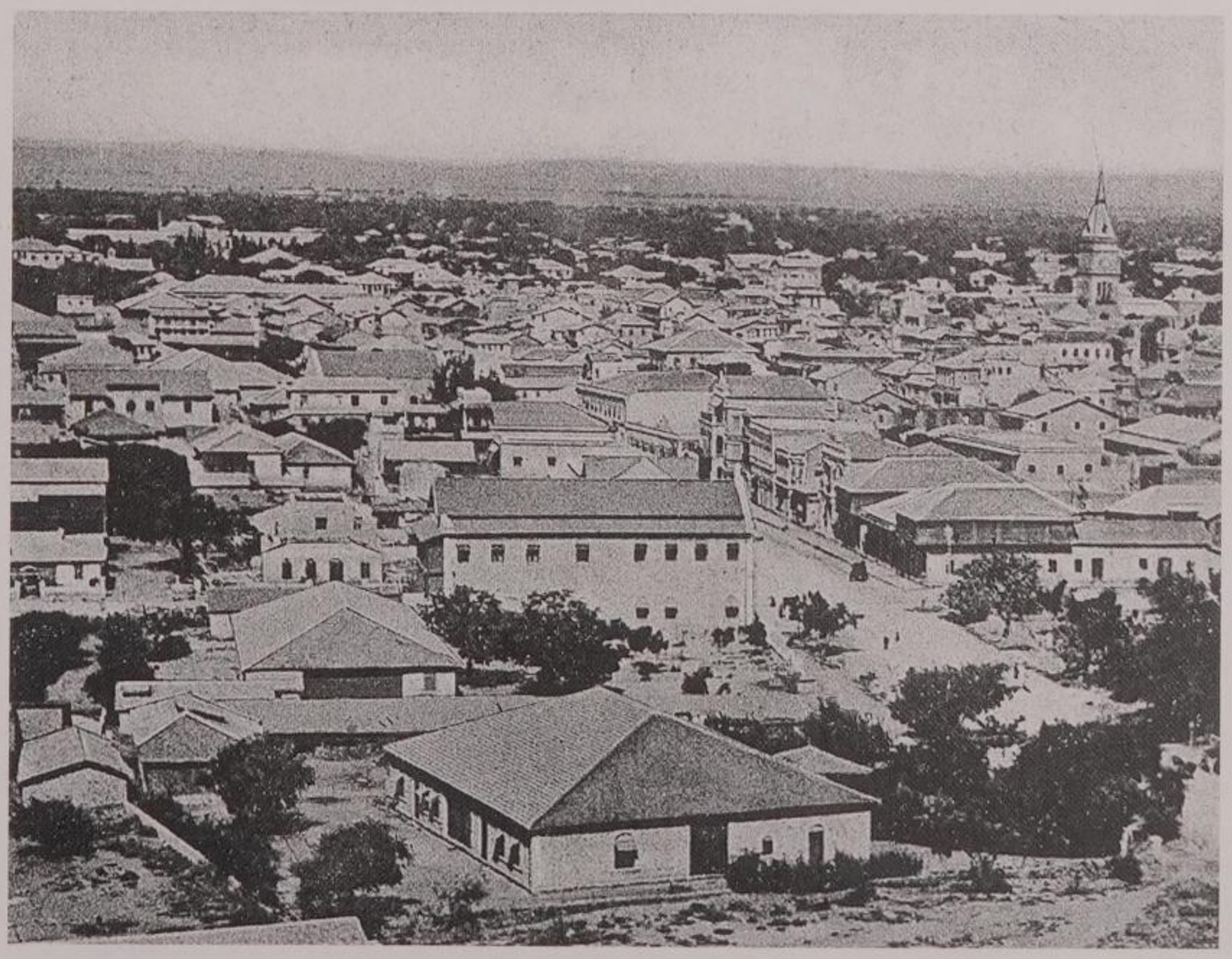
The Karachi Gymkhana, located on Scandal Point (later Club) Road, was a large Tudor-style building, constructed in 1886. Photograph: British Library.



4

View of Karachi.
Unknown photographer, c. 1900.
A. Hajee Dossul & Sons,
printed in Germany.
Toxy Cowasjee collection.

5
Frere Hall, the city's first town hall. Photograph: Nandita Bhavnani.

which Karachi became the premier city in Sindh, a city that all Sindhis came to idealize. Karachi, in turn, paid its homage to Frere in its first town hall, Frere Hall, a jewel of Indo-Gothic architecture (figure 5).

The American Civil War of 1861–65 and its consequent boost to the Indian cotton trade also contributed to Karachi's prosperity. When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, Karachi became the westernmost port in British India, 200 miles (320 kilometres) closer to Aden than Bombay. With the harbour becoming an all-weather port in 1873 and Karachi connected to the Punjab and Delhi Railway by 1878, the city's growth only accelerated, with the proliferation of new buildings, mostly in the Indo-Gothic style and fashioned out of the buff-coloured Ghizri limestone that became the trademark of Karachi architecture.

Patronized by the British, Sindhi Hindus now truly came into their own during the Raj. They grew not just in numbers but also amplified their mastery over education, business, and the bureaucracy. The Order of the Companion of the Star of India had earlier been bestowed upon Naomal Hotchand. Now his grandson Alumal Tikamdass was the first Sindhi to graduate in Arts from Bombay University, and went on to become a remarkable educationist, reforming Sindh's schools and retiring as Educational Inspector.

The ascent of the Hindus brought about a spurt in indigenous architecture which began in the late 19th century and lasted for close to 50 years. In 1893 the D.J. Sind Arts College was inaugurated, an imposing Italian Renaissance building on Kachehri Road (figure 2). The 1920s saw the building of the Amil Colony, Jamshed Quarters (figure 9), the palatial Hindu Gymkhana (figure 7), and various apartment buildings on Burns Road, Frere Road, and Bunder Road, owned by Shikarpuri bankers.

6

The lobby of the landmark Metropole Hotel, with the verandah on the left overlooking the garden.
Photograph courtesy Vera Dastur.

Another prominent people to establish their presence in Karachi were the Parsis, who soon acquired great wealth through their colonial connections. Although by the turn of the century they numbered less than a thousand, the Parsi presence in Karachi was significant. They were in shipping, hotels, automobiles, cotton, and military supplies. By 1893, Edulji Dinshaw, a military contractor who had risen from poverty, was rumoured to own half the city.

The Parsis of Karachi now had their own schools (figure 13), hospitals, and housing colonies, their own agiaries (figure 12) and Towers of Silence, and their own club (figure 11), the Karachi Parsi Institute (KPI). But given their tradition of philanthropy, they also gave back to the city: the Edulji Dispensary, the Jahangir Kothari Pavilion and Parade at Clifton, statuary at Frere Hall, the NED Engineering College, and the Parsi Ladies' Industrial Home (figure 10). Two of the city's mayors were Parsi: Sohrab Katrak and Jamshed Nusserwanjee Mehta, elected nine times. And Sindhi Hindu women readily adopted the Parsi-style sari, the fashion of those times (figure 8).

Thanks to its sea breeze, Karachi was much cooler than the rest of Sindh which would be scorching in the summer. So Karachi had a preponderance of British ladies: the Bombay Civil Service bureaucrats posted in the hot interior of Sindh would leave their wives here to while away their

7

The palatial Hindu Gymkhana.
Photograph: Nandita Bhavnani.

hours of leisure at the Karachi Gymkhana (figure 3) or the Boat Club: the Sind Club was exclusively for white men.

Other immigrants, attracted by the promise of opportunity, also contributed to Karachi's growth during the colonial era. Farmers from Kutch; businessmen from Punjab, Marwar, and Kathiawad; Irani and Afghan shopkeepers; Jews from the Bene Israel community of the Konkan, who came to the city as artisans, tradesmen, civil servants, and teachers, and even built a synagogue here (figure 14); cooks and butlers from Goa; Pathan and Multani moneylenders; schoolteachers from Bombay; gardeners and labourers from the United Provinces and Baluchistan. Karachi already had a community of Sidhis, erstwhile slaves from Zanzibar and Abyssinia. By the turn of the century, Karachi's population had swelled to well over a lakh. By the 1930s, more than half of the city's residents were from outside Sindh.

Karachi Remembered

Mohammad Usman Baloch, a retired trade union leader and politician, was born in Karachi in 1937: his grandfather had migrated to Sindh in the 19th century from neighbouring Baluchistan. He recalls colonial Karachi having generous green belts, watered by the Lyari and Malir; his grandfather oversaw farming near the Lyari river. He grew up in the Lyari Quarter, "a planned workers' colony", dominated by Baloch Muslims. The first thing that

8

Students of the D.J. Sind Arts College, 1940. The saris are worn by Sindhi Hindu girls in the Parsi style, the fashion in those days. Photograph: Mithi Bhavnani collection.

he remembers of colonial Karachi is its sparkling cleanliness. He recalls seeing Bunder Road being washed clean one night; his father, in turn, could remember horse-drawn trams, with the horses' droppings being swept away as soon as they touched the ground. On Bakri Id, when goats were slaughtered, someone would stand by with mud and lime powder to immediately cover the blood, so as to repel flies.

Karachi's legendary spotlessness is a recurring theme among many of Baloch's contemporaries. Duru Bhojwani, a businesswoman and social worker, lives in the same flat in Mahim, Mumbai, that her family moved into after Partition. In Karachi her family – descended from Naomal Hotchand and, before him, from the eponymous Bhojoomal – lived in a spacious bungalow in Amil Colony. "In the late evenings, people would go out for a stroll, able to walk barefoot on the cool pavements."

Muljibhai Sejpal, a Lohana businessman now living in Versova, Mumbai, was born in Karachi in 1928. His family used to live in a large three-storey house on Mission Road, near the Civil Hospital, and also had a sweetmeat shop in Joria Bazaar and a timber mart in Haji Camp. He recalls Karachi as a cosmopolitan, not a Sindhi, city, and his neighbourhood as predominantly Gujarati: Gujarati shops, Gujarati customers, Gujarati neighbours, Gujarati newspapers. He even attended a Gujarati-medium school, Sharda Mandir, one of Karachi's best. "*Zamano saaro hato*" (Those were good times), he says of his days there.

9

A house in Jamshed Quarters.
Photograph: Nandita Bhavnani.

10

Cowasjee and Virbaijee Variawa Parsi Ladies' Industrial Home.
Photograph: Toxy Cowasjee collection.

11

Karachi Parsi Institute Garden, 2006. Photograph: Toxy Cowasjee collection.

DhunMai Dalal, who now lives in Los Angeles, also has memories of a happy childhood, growing up in a mansion opposite both the Sind Club – "one of the most beautiful clubs I have ever seen" – as well as the Karachi Gymkhana, where her family, being Parsi, was one of the first among the natives to be granted membership. She recalls playing with English girls, attending ballet classes, and fun weekends spent at the beach at Buleji nearby. Her grandfather, Meherwanji Kandawalla, was the President of the Ghoragari (horse-carriage) Association, and subsequently made the logical progression to heading Karachi's automobile industry.

This cosmopolitan blend had achieved a peaceful coexistence. Bhojwani recalls: "Karachi was a very safe city, house doors were left open during the day. People would sleep in their balconies at night. There was no fear." DhunMai Dalal also affirms this memory of security: "While my parents rested in the afternoons I would slip out on my bicycle in shorts and cycle over Clifton Bridge. I was not allowed to cycle on the roads, but I would do it anyway. There would be not a soul on the roads, but I had to wait, wobbling on my bicycle, at the traffic junction, till the policeman would let me turn. It's not safe like that anymore, either for cyclists or for girls in shorts."

Yet, the ascendancy of the Hindu star had brought about great resentment among Sindhi Muslims, unused to Hindu domination after eleven centuries of unbroken Muslim rule. This in turn gave impetus to separationist sentiments, resulting in the separation of Sindh Province from Bombay Presidency in 1935.

With Karachi the capital of the new province, the city's growth accelerated further, especially under the stalwart stewardship of Jamshed Nusserwanjee

12

The agiary in Saddar. Photograph: Toxy Cowasjee collection.

Mehta. Despite a population boom of 45 per cent in less than a decade, Karachi had wide streets, green parks, an underground drainage system, modern amenities, and a cosmopolitan atmosphere (figure 6), making it one of India's most modern and fastest-growing cities and the country's third port.

Partition

Thanks in part to its sparkling reputation, Karachi was chosen to become the first capital of Pakistan. In 1947 it found itself struggling to accommodate the streams of refugees that had flooded the city. The influx of Mohajirs brought about marked communal tension that culminated in the Karachi riots of January 6, 1948. When the violence broke out, Sejpal and his brother stood outside their home, safe in the Muslim dress – a red waistcoat, Pathani sandals, a Jinnah cap, and a star-and-moon badge – that they had worn since Independence. A hot-blooded mob passed by, urging them to join the plunder. "We have looted already, you go ahead and loot," Sejpal replied, who could then only watch helplessly as they proceeded to ransack his house.

When a 150-strong mob came to attack the Bhojwani house, the family was rescued by their Muslim neighbours – recently-arrived Mohajirs – who put them up for a few days before they could leave for India. Usman Baloch, too, recalls his father bringing home a dozen or so Hindus, his colleagues at the salt works in Mauripur, and their families. They too stayed in Baloch's home for a few days before migrating.

Duru Bhojwani and Muljibhai Sejpal were part of a haemorrhage of Hindus from Sindh, many sailing from Karachi. Usman Baloch still remembers the emigrants loading their baggage onto donkey-carts and making their way to the docks at Keamari (figure 1), once the point of entry for the British, and now the gateway to Pakistan for many Mohajirs. Decades later, Sindhi Hindus still miss this city which had been their home.

Karachi, Capital of Pakistan

When Muljibhai Sejpal went back in 1949 – again disguised as a Muslim – to extricate his bank deposits and business assets, he found the city crowded with Mohajirs. Partition had irrevocably transformed Karachi. Flooded with eight lakh refugees, the city's population grew roughly 250 per cent in the short span of four years, wrecking its infrastructure: Karachi has never quite recovered from this onslaught. Once a Hindu-dominated city, Karachi now became overwhelmingly Muslim. Also, it was now dominated by the alien culture and language of the Mohajirs; this, combined with the brief divorce of Karachi from the rest of Sindh in 1948, laid the foundation for decades of Sindhi discontent and unrest.

13
Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School, established 1859. Photograph: Toxy Cowasjee collection.

Among the lakhs of refugees from India was a young teenage boy from Allahabad called Suhail Lari. He recalls that refugees were living in any open space that they could find: the city centre was extremely crowded with politically volatile slums. The government then began to set up new colonies – Pir Ilahi Bux Colony, Nazimabad, PECHS – and the city began to spread outwards, levelling cactus, sand dunes, and hillocks in its wake.

Karachi, the fastest growing city in India, now grew even faster. Not just refugees, but all Pakistanis – Pathans, Punjabis, Balochis – came to the capital: the growth rate of Karachi was twice the national rate. Young men from Pakistan's villages had substantial reasons to come to Karachi: employment and the freedom to live undisciplined by their elders: to dress and behave as they pleased, to watch movies, and to listen to music. Karachi was also perceived as a staging post to go abroad.

Lari remembers Karachi as more cosmopolitan in those early years: "There were Christians, Parsis, there were bars, coffeehouses, snooker halls. Zellin's Coffee House was filled with students, intellectuals." He himself used to spend a lot of his time at Zellin's which was in Saddar, then a fashionable area, between Victoria Road and "Elphie" (Elphinstone) Street. "Later one could go to see a film or go for a walk and look at the Parsi girls in their skirts."

Karachi Today

In 1962, the capital was shifted to Islamabad and Karachi became more business-oriented. While the city spread into the desert to the north, it also began to spread southwards, reclaiming land from the marshes, giving birth to the fashionable Defence Housing Society, and expanding Clifton. The policy of regularizing previously unauthorized construction under the regimes of both Yahya Khan and Z.A. Bhutto led to the mushrooming of the *kutchi abadis* (shanty towns) – notably Orangi and Korangi – which came up in the 1970s. This decade also witnessed the ruthless nationalization drive of Bhutto, which forced many industrialists out of Pakistan, notably the Parsis; this is when DhunMai Dalal and her husband migrated to the US.

In the late 1970s and '80s, the revolution in neighbouring Iran and the Afghan war brought sectarian violence to Karachi. The Shia-Sunni conflict was soon aligned on communal lines with most of the Shias involved being Mohajirs, and the Sunnis mostly Pathans. This resulted in what Lari calls the "weaponization of society," with mosque bombings, armed robberies, and kidnappings for ransom becoming common. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement, which tried to transcend the Shia-Sunni conflict by uniting the Mohajirs, now dominates Karachi. But now the madrasas of the 1980s have become nurseries of terrorism, and "weaponized" Karachi has a flourishing underworld.

Today Karachi is Pakistan's premier port and metropolis, contributing about a quarter of the country's revenues and GDP. While the Hindus of Karachi are now only a tiny fraction of what they used to be, there is still an influential Parsi community,

14

Magen Shalom Synagogue, Karachi, built in 1893. It was demolished in the 1980s and today a shopping mall stands in its place. Photograph courtesy Diana Reuben.

although they too are diminished in number. DhunMai Dalal makes annual visits to her close relatives in Karachi, but says she doesn't recognize many new faces in the city. "In the early years, Parsis were respected and the community flourished. Today I am deeply saddened to see our community's population decline continuously, especially the youth." Today there are less than 2,000 Parsis left in Karachi – their numbers have come full circle – however, they are still influential, with a notable presence in the hotel business.

Most of Karachi's 1.5 crore denizens are outsiders – Mohajir and Punjabi – while barely 6 per cent are native Sindhis. According to Baloch, Urdu-speaking Muslims from India, Pathans, Memons, and Punjabis now live in areas like Lyari, Gadi Khato, Kharo Dar, and Burns Garden that were once dominated by Sindhis. He himself has shifted out of Lyari to Garden East nearby. "Sindhis have become a minority in Karachi," he says with great sadness in his voice. As a result, most of Karachi's residents are strangers to the city's history.

Consequently, for many decades, not much attention was paid to the conservation of colonial and indigenous heritage buildings in Karachi. However, the Heritage Foundation, which was established in 1981 by Suhail Lari, with his architect wife Yasmeen Lari, has documented pre-1947 buildings, and also drafted a law for their preservation which was passed by the Sindh Assembly in 1994. They also set up Karavan Karachi, a series of weekly entertainment events in front of prominent heritage buildings. With good public response, interest in the preservation of heritage architecture has increased.

Today the mansions in Amil Colony and Bunder Road Extension are still handsome, although somewhat haggard. The Sind Club is still the haunt of Karachi's elite; a large portrait of Sir Charles Napier adorns its dining hall. Napier Road, though, is home to Karachi's red-light district. Today there are Agra Colony and Aligarh Colony, and avenues named for Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Liaquat Ali Khan. And a road once named after Naomal Hotchand is now called Shah Waliullah Road. The Hindu cremation grounds in Lyari no longer exist – Bihar Colony stands in its place. But Lyari itself has become a haven for crime and drugs. The *kutchi abadi*s crawl outwards into the desert, the walls around houses in Defence and Clifton grow higher and higher. And Karachi, the city that lives on the edge, continues to explode into the desert of Sindh.

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Tell me the stories, oh
thorn-brush,
Of the mighty merchants of
the Indus,
Of the nights and days of
prosperous times.
Are you in pain now, oh
thorn-brush?
Because they have departed;
In protest, cease to flower.

– Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai[1]
(1689–1752)

1

"Hope-I", by Sadequain, 1968.
122 x 92 cm.

Of Migrations and Transitions: Contemporary Art in Sindh

Salima Hashmi

The cultural fabric of Sindh altered irrevocably with Independence and the Partition of India in 1947. Karachi, a placid seaport with limited aspirations to prominence, was catapulted into the limelight as the capital city of the new state of Pakistan. As hundreds and thousands made their way across the borders of the subcontinent, Karachi became the preferred destination for refugees from Bombay, Gujarat, Bihar, and the United Provinces. Thousands of families fanned out simultaneously into smaller towns – Hyderabad, Sukkur, Mirpur, Nawabshah, and Shikarpur – taking over homes and properties abandoned by refugees who had fled in the opposite direction.

This demographic deluge swiftly changed the socio-political and cultural environment, creating conflicts and transformations, which continue to resonate and challenge Sindhi society today. The impact of this cultural cocktail on the visual arts is reflected in the parallel streams that continue to coexist. The intrusion of unfamiliar patterns of patronage, and of pictorial tastes and configurations created a sense of alienation in those who bore the brunt of the "arrival", corresponding to the bewilderment and pain of those "arriving".

The many-layered spread of contemporary art in Sindh is patched together rather like a *ralli*, the appliquéd quilt, of pieces stitched together, some ancient, some decaying, and some new. Before Independence, the "fine arts" in Karachi were not dissimilar to those in other cities across India, although being a backwater, Karachi was by no means in the same league as Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, or Lahore, where the arts and crafts schools had been established by the British in the 19th century. Nor did it boast of artists' studios like those of the Ukil Brothers in Delhi, or B.C. Sanyal in Lahore. It did, however, offer modest patronage to transient aquatint engravers, lithographers, watercolour artists, photographers, and portrait painters, who served feudal families, commercial houses, and the British establishment. Public sculptures in marble and bronze represented the philanthropy of Parsi city fathers and the pompous writ of Pax Britannica.

2

"Maharani Padmani", by Fyzee Rahamin, 1935. Oil on canvas. Photograph: Arif Mahmood.

The winds of early modernism, slowly evolving in Lahore in the 1930s, had not moved south to Sindh. Lahore's artistic dialogues were between Abdur Rehman Chughtai and the Bengal School in Calcutta. Amrita Sher-Gil was making waves in Lahore when she died unexpectedly in 1941. Karachi was not privy to these artistic debates. The only distinguished painters to move from Bombay to Karachi post-Independence were Fyzee Rahamin and his wife Attiya Begum. Having migrated to Karachi at the express invitation of the Father of the Nation, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Fyzees were disappointed by the provincialism of Karachi society. Begum Attiya's "soirees" were devoid of the company of artists and intellectuals she had been used to in Bombay. Fyzee Rahamin, a former student of John Singer Sargent and a notable portraitist, found the art milieu equally barren. An urbane painter of subtle tastes, his palette and delicate brushwork, recalling traditions of fresco and tempera paintings, was quite lost in Karachi (figure 2).

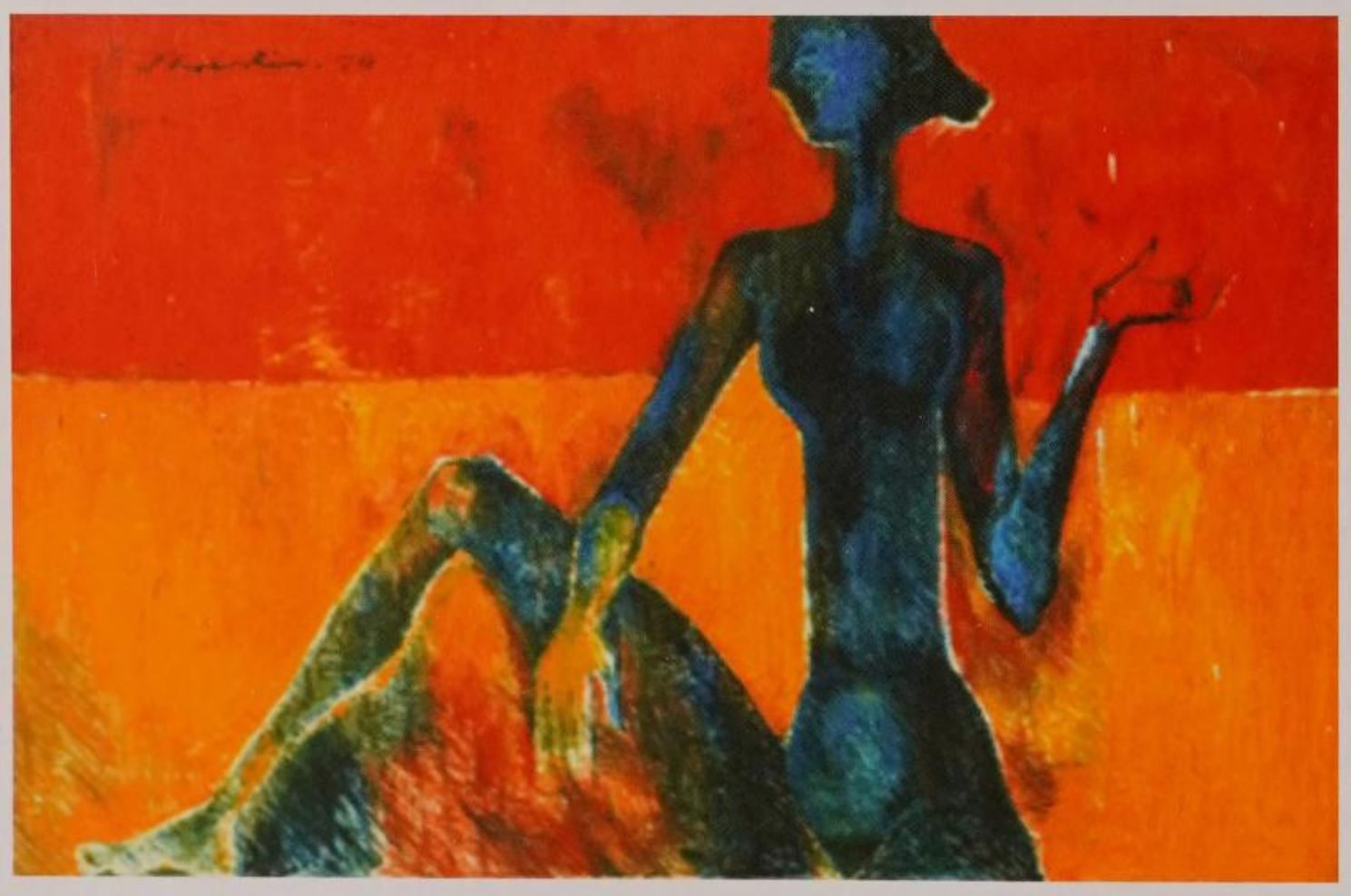
Although the newly established Pakistani bureaucracy was a faithful counterpart of the just departed colonials, they had yet to turn their attention to matters of art and culture. Composed mostly of the Mohajirs (refugees), this Urdu-speaking minority elite was engrossed in putting down roots in a new environment. It was not until the early '50s that they focused their attention on an artist who engaged their imagination. Sadequain (1930–87) had moved from Amroha in U.P. to Karachi after Partition. He found a patron in Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy, who introduced him to Karachi's elite circles.

Sadequain's genteel Urdu and courtly mannerisms struck a chord with the migrant community who welcomed him into their homes. Vazira Fazila Yacobali posits, "This array of patronage was an outcome of both the need for a nationalist elite to represent the national through the visual arts as well as Sadequain's particular ability to fulfill this need."[2]

This view of Sadequain's potential and talent was further validated by his being awarded the "Laureate Under 35" at the Paris Biennale in 1961. This gave his work a gratifying stamp of international approval, seemingly on its own terms. The painting for which the award was conferred was titled "The Last Supper", an example of the artist's adeptness at manipulating the symbolic connections between audience and maker. The austere black silhouettes in the painting seemed linked to Sadequain's earlier cactus drawings[3] and could just as easily be read as calligraphic structures, as indeed they were. The strong and consistent linearity in Sadequain's work, whether figurative or abstract, may well have come from his lineage – his family of calligraphers and writers (figure 1). Yacobali notes, "This marker of difference from the West provided the appropriate combination of Western subject and Eastern form, Western recognition and Eastern authenticity which would lend his work the stature of the National."[4]

The legend of the "fakir-painter" was well on its way to becoming the public persona of the artist and would often detract from Sadequain's work, discouraging serious analysis and critical acceptance. An artist of prodigious energy and output, his forays

3
"Seated Figure", by Shakir Ali, 1970.
Oil on canvas; 89 x 135 cm.



into poetry also linked him to the literary world. Befriended by Marxist poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sadequain's imagery took on socialist overtones. The Urdu press wrote in awe of the bohemian fakir, whose works afforded literal interpretations for a public not used to engaging with the fine arts. A large number of public commissions came his way: Karachi airport, the State Bank murals in Karachi, the Punjab Public Library, and others. The most celebrated were the ones in the powerhouse at the Mangla Dam, "The Saga of Labour", which was a paean to the working classes, and the ceiling "Arz-o-Saman" at the Lahore Museum.

Having illustrated the works of Iqbal, Faiz, and Ghalib, Sadequain's Quranic calligraphy of the last years of his life is attributed to the compulsion of working under conditions imposed by General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime (1977–88). His flamboyant and vivid imagery gave way to a decorative, repetitive oeuvre, which ironically became synonymous with Sadequain in the public mind.

Quite distinct from Sadequain was the emigré Shakir Ali, whose early training at the J.J. School of Art at Bombay had been dramatically modified by his studies at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Shakir Ali's father had served the Nawab of Rampur with distinction in India and the family now struggled to find a foothold in Karachi. Shakir Ali joined them in 1951 on his return from Europe, and found the city unwelcoming and unsympathetic to both art and artist. His first solo exhibition, held at the Arts Council the same year, consisted of modernist works and was greeted by public indifference.

Shakir Ali was as diffident and sparse in artistic output as Sadequain was prolific. The two artists were distanced in their lives and works, yet each was aware of the other's claim to being the "herald of the modern". Unlike Sadequain, Shakir Ali avoided the narrative in his work, alluding instead to the pastoral

4
Calligraphy by Ismail Gulgee.
150 x 210 cm.

mythological archetypes from Crete, Greece, Ajanta, Lascaux, and Altamira. His palette was highly coloured (figure 3), his marks richly textured, the calligraphic cross-hatching deeply embedded in the tapestry of space.

Among the artists who explored calligraphy in a more gestural manner was Ismail Gulgee (1926–2007). A native of Karachi and an engineer by training, Gulgee first gained prominence through his well crafted portraits of the leader of his community, the Aga Khan, to be supplemented by official portraits of Ayub Khan and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Using lapis lazuli, these ornate works became celebrated in elite circles. Gulgee's personal oeuvre was abstract expressionist works in luscious colours, with additions of gold-leaf and semi-precious stones. He veered to calligraphy like so many others during Zia-ul-Haq's regime, when patronage for the genre became generous (figure 4).

Karachi burgeoned in population, trade, and political activity in the first two decades after Independence, even as President General Ayub Khan moved the capital up north to Islamabad, closer to military strongholds. Contentious linguistic

5
"Dimensions of Solitude", by Musarrat Mirza, 1984. Oil on canvas; 84 x 84 cm.

and ethnic issues were now simmering across Sindh. Interestingly, the teaching of art was opposed at Karachi University[5] at the same time as a Fine Art department was set up at the University of Sindh in Jamshoro. It may be of significance that the Jamshoro Campus catered primarily to the native Sindhi-speaking population, while Karachi University was, and continues to be, a stronghold of the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, often linked to the religious right.

In Jamshoro, painters Musarrat Mirza (b. 1939) and A.R. Nagori (b. 1938), taught and practised their art for over three decades, the former drawing upon her sensory response to the sand-coloured streets of her native Sukkur, while the latter interpreted social and political concerns with vehemence. Mirza's sensitivity to the brooding isolation of the desert and her involvement with Sufism may have been instrumental in clarifying her academic vision. Her palette, infused with earthiness, combines with an ethereal, mellow light playing on mud-plastered forms. The animal and human actors in her street- and cityscapes are barely discernible from a sudden shaft of light in a dusty doorway (figure 5).

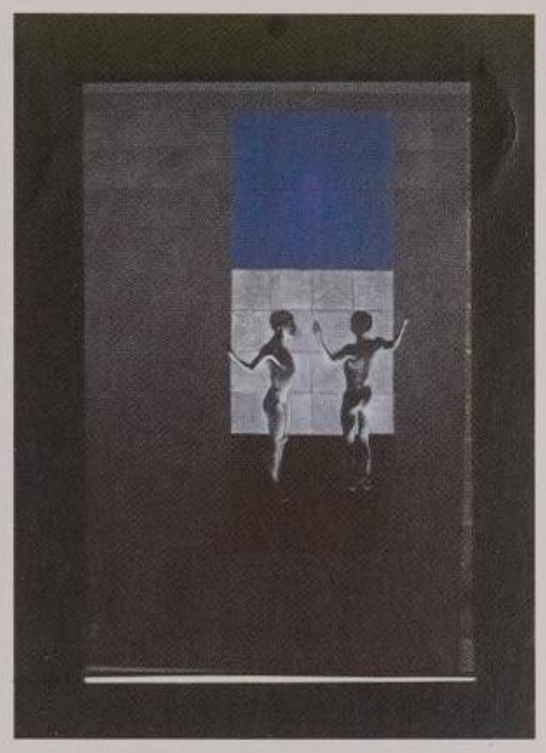
A.R. Nagori, on the other hand, overtly took up artistic cudgels on behalf of the dispossessed and abused. His thematic content referred to the abuse of women and the violent political oppression during the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, specifically in Sindh. Employing colour and pattern in a manner which was deeply local, Nagori tapped into fast-fading memories of textile and home-crafts.

Zahoorul Akhlaq (1941–99), Shahid Sajjad (b. 1937), and Jamil Naqsh (b. 1937) are the three major artists who shaped the aesthetic concerns of the 1970s and '80s. All three moved across the border to Pakistan as children, carrying profound memories of dislocation and loss. Shifting boundaries and negotiated crossings lie at the very core of Akhlaq's work. Arguably Pakistan's most influential artist, Akhlaq represented both the cerebral and the sensuous (figure 6). Painter, sculptor, teacher, and theoretician,[6] Akhlaq "explored canons of art-making particular to the subcontinent and the inferences which accompanied the advent of Islam in the area".[7] This was interwoven with thematic, philosophical, and intimate emotional narratives. Before his violent murder in 1999, Akhlaq had embarked on his most emotive series of works titled "A Visit to the Inner Sanctum" in which the human figure, desirous of flight, or perhaps descent, is trapped in indescribable limbo. The undercurrent of pain is subtle; the palpable condition of stress is circumscribed in lyrical mark-making. The "inner" and "outer" are in delicate equilibrium, indefinitely poised.

Patronage for sculpture has been meagre in Pakistan. But Karachi has managed to sustain a few tenacious practitioners. Shahid Sajjad's work can be seen in the context of a lifelong struggle committed to the practice in arid terrain. Sajjad had lived among the tribal people in the forest of the Chittagong hill tracts before East Pakistan broke away and became Bangladesh in 1971. Seeking the essence of what makes us human, Shahid Sajjad instils into the figure of the primitive the power of its own vulnerability (figure 7). Equally fluent in bronze as in wood, his works have the uncanny ability to be liberated from their time-"situatedness" and to defy stylistic classification.

In a social climate supposedly hostile to representation of the nude figure, the adroit and highly skilled Jamil Naqsh has focused his art-making almost exclusively on his preoccupation with the unclothed female form. For an artist who has rarely exhibited his work publicly (except early on in his career), he enjoys a reverent following and much acclaim. This phenomenon of not being viewed and yet being patronized, reflects some of the paradoxes in Pakistani society. Naqsh's tenacious recycling of a single theme, albeit executed with lyrical finesse, points both to his business acumen and to the contradiction between public–private moralistic positions.

The female form was also seized upon as a metaphor by women artists when General Zia-ul-Haq's fundamentalist policies were translated into law. The visual arts, although not forbidden, were "directed" to



6
"Untitled" (Butoh series), by Zahoorul Akhlaq, 1994. Acrylic on canvas; 151.2 x 102 cm.

7
"One is Not without the Other", by Shahid Sajjad, 2002–04. Yew wood; 210 cm.

8

"Woman" series, by Nahid Raza, 1991. Acrylic on paper; 76 x 54 cm.

be "Islamic" in form and content. Acceptable genres were calligraphy, landscapes, and portraits of national leaders. For women artists who had seldom viewed their work in a socio-political context, these developments served to galvanize a nascent movement into a full-blown insurrection. The female body assumed a centrality in art as women rode the crest of exhilarating self-discovery. Women artists attending a National Symposium in Lahore in 1983 secretly signed a Manifesto;[8] of the 15 signatories, six were from Karachi, all of them "new" Sindhis.

The "newest" of them all is Mehr Afroze, who moved from Lucknow in 1971. For Mehr Afroze the migration meant a complete disruption of her personal and professional life. Having embarked on a career as a printmaker, she found Karachi inhospitable and apathetic to her art-making. Struggling to make connections, Afroze eventually gained access to printmaking facilities, employment, and exhibition spaces. Never provocative, Afroze has internalized her intense scrutiny of the tangible and intangible in her new location. Invariably small in scale, the surfaces she weaves are layered, dense, and oblique. There is a duality of content which on one level refers to emblems, personages, legends, and on another level to deep, well-camouflaged beliefs. Afroze does not deny the subtle yet substantial tensions played out in her work as a result of migration.

Nahid Raza, another signatory to the Women's Manifesto, directly confronts the tribulations of being a woman in a patriarchal society. Often autobiographical, her defiance intuitively wends its way into a tapestry of narrative with ebullient colour. The woman and her body are centre-stage; emotional fulfilment is always out of reach, but a sensual lyricism is achieved (figure 8).

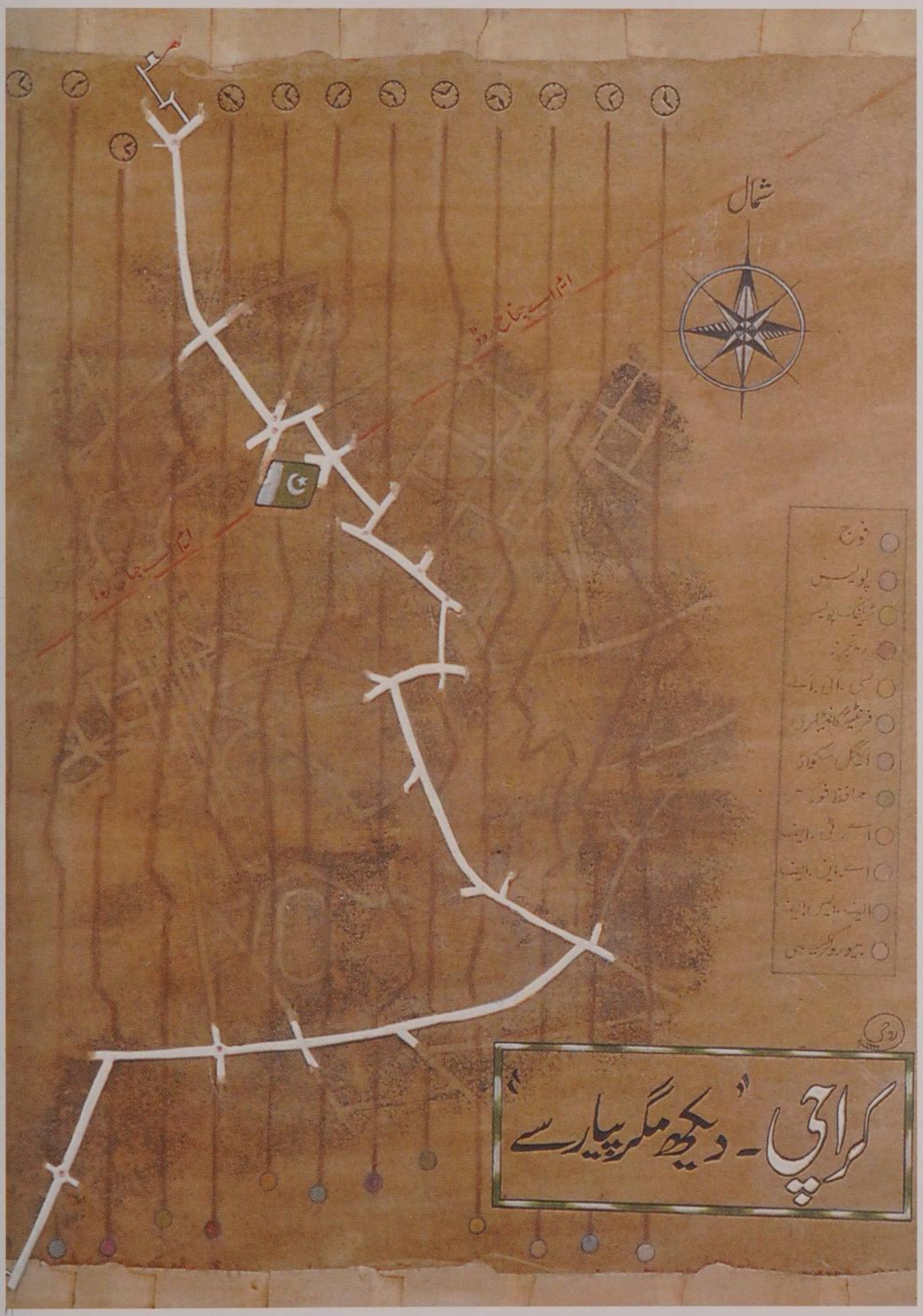
Karachi, the teeming metropolis as it has become, confounds the visual artist. Concurrent to the urban population explosion, rural communities have encroached into the city, creating layers of subcultures of sign, symbol, and pattern. Truck paintings (which are not restricted to trucks) have mutated from the rural folk adornment into big-city spangles, stars, and arabesques in paint, metal, plastic, and neon. Cinema hoardings, calendars, greeting cards, labels, posters, toys have created a cogent and well understood visual diction, much to the envy of the "fine" artist in search of a popular vocabulary. The "fine" artist's discovery of the "low" art began in Karachi in the 1990s. As Quddus Mirza observed, "This union

of artistic necessities was structured on the relationship of power; it was one of trade between the learned and the illiterate, the privileged and the deprived, the artist and the artisan."[9]

Among the many artists engaging with these issues were Durriya Kazi, David Alesworth, Iftikhar Dadi, and Elizabeth Dadi. Their seminal work "Heart Mahal", shown originally as part of the *Container 96* exhibition in Copenhagen and later at the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale in 1999, was a collaborative work done with urban artisans, Mohammed Yusuf, Mairaj Nickwala,

9

"Heart Mahal", by Durriya Kazi, David Alesworth, Iftikhar Dadi, Elizabeth Dadi, 1996. Detail of painted panel.



10

"*Dekh Magar Pyar Se*", by Roohi Ahmed, 1999. Mixed media on gypsum board; 76 x 46 cm.

Bachoo, and Shaukat Lala. "Heart Mahal" (figure 9) was a composite of many parts: images developed by the artists and executed by the artisans in paint, steel, wire, mesh, and neon. It pulsated with light and colour, setting up a visual dialogue which provoked more questions than it answered.

The blurring of boundaries between "high" and "low" art continued to engage Iftikhar Dadi. As lines were drawn across sectarian, linguistic, and ethnic groups, Dadi challenged "official" discourses in culture and religion. In his ironic light-box installations, Dadi made fun of Hindu–Muslim

11
"Salma Sitara Behne Workshop", by Adeela Suleman, 2002. Metal, fabric, paint, and other material; size variable.

stereotyping as well as conventions such as purdah, and the unquestioning reverence for national heroes. The light-boxes hinted at the convenience of selling everything through seductive advertising strategies – ideology, sweetmeats, or toothpaste.

The harshness of Karachi's fratricidal wars made life precarious for its citizens, specially those who chose to cross over into territories not in their ethnic, political, or class domain. Roohi Ahmed's art-maps of the only city she has known and lived in are about these daily journeys (figure 10). Works such as "*Dekh Magar Pyar Se*" (You Can Look, But Only With Love, 1999) embody the grim reality of the lives of Karachi's inhabitants. But these works are also a testament to the artist's right to live her life as a commentator. A meticulous eye penetrates the surface glossiness of Karachi.

Eventually it is the streets, the neighbourhoods, and the people whose palpable presence finds voice in the work of today's generation of artists: Huma Mulji, Asma Mundrawala, and Adeela Suleman. Unwilling to disentangle "art" from "life", they choose to draw them close, making it convenient for ordinary mass-produced articles to aspire to the status of art. Mulji's "Heart Machine" dispenses hearts at ten rupees a go, tiny plastic dolls meet their beloved under a rubbish heap. Suleman fashions helmets out of *handi*s (cooking pots) for women motorcyclists (figure 11), and Mundrawala concocts hairstyles to gladden the hearts of brides-to-be. Prising open sequestered lives with affection, the artists suggest that the art object can be accessible, personal.

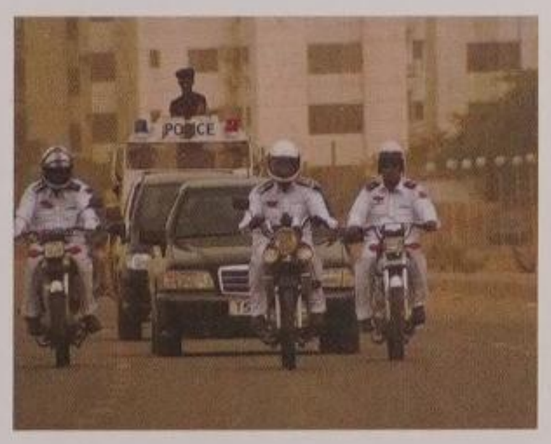
Transcending the studio space is also the chosen trajectory for Naiza Khan. Taking her practice out of the gallery and onto the walls of the city was an attempt to engage quite literally with the street (figure 12). Representations of the female body, elaborated through stencilled hands in henna paste, were sensuous presences in the pristine confines of the gallery. On the walls of the city, they became both defiant and vulnerable. Naazish Ataullah posits, "The use of henna, stamped or stenciled onto the silhouettes on the walls is deliberate, powerful and violent. The reference to the myth of Anarkali, the beloved of Prince Salim, who was interred alive into a wall at the behest of Emperor Akbar, is symbolic of a non-conformist act of defiance."[10]

Proliferating private TV channels have filled the entertainment vacuum in the absence of a cinema-going urban culture. Pakistani cinema, once a robust industry, has all but disappeared as a consequence of strict censorship and media control during the '80s. Bani Abidi's video works probe the bizarre contradictions embedded in daily living. Official vilification of "Indian" culture coexists with a voracious public appetite for Indian soaps and Bollywood fare. A self-conscious deification of the Father of the Nation [Jinnah] runs parallel to desultory responses to symbols of patriotism. Abidi's caustic vignettes challenge assumptions underlying national agendas (figure 13).

A younger generation of artists from the Sindhi-speaking population has recently emerged most dramatically from smaller towns. Once vibrant and productive communities, these came to be considered

12
"Henna Hands", by Naiza Khan, 2003. Henna pigment on wall.

13
"Reserved", by Bani Abidi, 2006. Video still 2.



14

"After Kipling", by Ahmed Ali Manganhar, 2006. Oil on slate; 20 x 25 cm.

economic and cultural backwaters. There is evidence now, however, of an artistic renaissance of sorts. Among this new talent are artists Mohammed Ali Talpur, Naseer Burghurio, Mahboob Shah, and Ayaz Jokhio. Making their way to study at the National College of Arts, Lahore, they rapidly cut their artistic teeth, grappling with the issues of cultural streaming, ethnic privilege, and nationhood. Ayaz Jokhio is a poet and a painter who worked as a columnist and translator before moving to Lahore. Not unexpectedly, his work is infused with interlacings of text. Using the "title" as a way into the "work", it serves to further visual communication. Eventually this becomes part of the image itself, to the point that the text subsumes the image. As a sub-text, Jokhio reveals systems of learning which taint and condition the classroom.

Mahboob Shah belongs to the same village as Ayaz Jokhio – where they jointly made the decision to study art. Unlike Jokhio, Shah's imagery is more overt. He casts a sardonic eye on defining symbols of "nation". He looks at the vast corpus of images produced for popular consumption, i.e. flags, posters, calendars, which integrate religion with patriotism. Pompous, yet fragile proclamations of ideology, they can be curiously beguiling. Mahboob Shah's works therefore are simultaneously dark and playful. The vulnerability of icons such as "Father of the Nation" are explored in tongue-in-cheek visual mantras. The icons themselves indicate ways to resist assimilation.

Mohammed Ali Talpur, on the other hand, takes his cue from the sensory fabric of his surroundings. From cinema hoardings to multiple images rolling off printing presses, Talpur has been a diligent observer of fast-changing urban visuals. Yet he is constrained to step back into early memories: tracings left by the flight of birds, wires stretched taut across desert horizons, lines in school exercise books. He recalls and recovers the sensitivity of the faded mark. With all of this, Talpur weaves subtle magnetic pathways.

Ahmed Ali Manganhar fluctuates between embracing the fait accompli handed down by imperial vision, and a desire to subvert the canon with sly humour. Unlike the majority of practitioners in Sindh today, Manganhar's roots lie deeply embedded in its soil. Born in Tando Allahyar, where his ancestors were court musicians, he learnt calligraphy and portraiture from his

older brother before learning drawing and painting skills from Sain Fateh Halepoto in Hyderabad. It was in his teacher's library that he saw reproductions of European artists for the first time. The history of painting for him has meant the Europeans: Caravaggio, Van Gogh, Manet, Degas, and Gauguin. He worked his way to Karachi, and eventually to the National College of Arts in Lahore. Over the years, he prospected academic genres with intelligence, energy, and convincing dexterity, but eventually the premise dulled. Intuitively Manganhar went home to near-history. Samina Choonara notes, "Ahmed Ali visits the derelict landscape of Sindh, the stage for the high drama of conflicted encounter with 'the ultimate enemy' as the British in India have been called by post-colonial academics."[11]

Painting on slates (once a practice in use in all schools but now almost non-existent), Ahmed Ali uses images of the Raj, faded masters, decaying landscapes, obsolete objects, creating a fragmented narrative (figure 14). The aqueous paint is suffused with the memory of grandeur and appalling oblivion. Says the artist, "In all this time I have looked at, studied, and worked in many 'historical' buildings from the 18th century. The Hyderabad Fort is part of how I remember Sindh. I have looked at these concrete memories of the British Empire in India and wondered about relationships of betrayal and of continuity."

Taking some pleasure in subverting the swagger of the Sovereign, Ahmed Ali understands the relevance of history's arrogance. As Choonara suggests, "there is no closure...." Ahmed Ali Manganhar's latest series "Primary Lessons" may well etch out "a piece of land without history inhabited by a people without clear contours".

NOTES

1. Bhitai translation from Prof. D.H. Bhutani, *Melody and Philosophy of Shah Latif*, Promila and Co., New Delhi, 1991.

2. Vazira Fazila Yacobali, "Sadequain The Holy Sinner", in *Sadequain: The Making and Unmaking of a National Artist*, eds. Said and Yousaf Akhund, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, 2002.

3. In the late 1950s, Sadequain recuperated from a lung collapse in a hut on Gadani beach, and drew incessantly from the cacti growing in the desert along the shore.

4. Yacobali, op. cit.

5. The Department of Visual Art, Karachi University was established in 2001, and continues to face opposition from right-wing students.

6. Zahoorul Akhlaq taught at the National College of Arts from 1962 to 1991. He retired as Professor of Fine Art. He was posthumously awarded the "Pride of Performance" by the Government of Pakistan in 2005. Born in Delhi, he stayed close to his family roots in Karachi.

7. Salima Hashmi, "Modernities and Memories – Recent works from the Islamic world", in the catalogue *Zahoorul Akhlaq,* ed. Hassanuddin Khan, Rockefeller Foundation, New York, 1997.

8. The Women Artists Manifesto was signed by Abbasi Abidi, Mehr Afroze, Talat Ahmed, Veeda Ahmed, Sheherzade Alam, Riffat Alvi, Maimoona Bashir, Salima Hashmi, Birjees Iqbal, Zubaida Javed, Jalees Nagi, Qudsia Nisar, Nahid Raza, Lala Rukh, and Rabia Zuberi. The full text is available in *Unveiling the Visible, Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan* (p. 193) by Salima Hashmi, published by Sang-e-Meel Publishers, Lahore, 2003.

9. Quddus Mirza, "Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth – Homemade in Public", in *Beyond the Future: The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Brisbane, 1999.

10. Naazish Ataullah, "Old Masters, Young Voices", in the catalogue *Naiza Khan*, South Asian Masters Exhibition at Alhamra, Chief Minister's Task Force, Lahore, 2004.

11. Samina Choonara, Introduction in the catalogue *Reimagining Landscape*, Rohtas Gallery, Islamabad, 2005.

FIGURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All images courtesy Salima Hashmi.

Excavating Memories: Images on a Quilt Cover

Yashodhara Dalmia

If there is one event that has fired the imagination of artists of the Indian subcontinent, it has been that of the Partition in 1947 and the tumultuous times that followed in its wake. In one way or the other, art became a barometer of the intense agony that the loss of family, relationships, land, and wealth created: erasures of existence in the lives of millions. Artists in India, like their counterparts in Pakistan, re-created these troubled times in diverse and impassioned ways, reliving that painful period. Thus if the late B.C. Sanyal was to lose not only his paintings along with his studio, but also the city (Lahore) to which he felt rooted, for Krishen Khanna it was a sense of the loss of the intimate conviviality among people of all faiths and religions. The artist Satish Gujral has vividly depicted the trauma which like a whirlwind swept away everything that was precious to him.

Of the artists of Sindhi origin who migrated to India at the time of Partition, one of the best known is Nalini Malani. A significant aspect of her work consists of the catastrophic events of man-made disasters and their effect on generations of human beings. We focus here on a poignant installation "Excavated Images" (1999) in which she dwells on her own narrative of being uprooted from Sindh and migration to India during the holocaust of Partition.

In "Excavated Images" Nalini Malani installs a quilt cover or *lihaf* which her grandmother Saraswati brought with her when she fled from Karachi just a few days before Partition, and paints on it the portraits of three generations of women – her grandmother, mother Satni, and herself – decapitated by the havoc wrought on their lives, depriving them of home and land. The edges of the quilt are left frayed and are emblematic of the extremely hazardous journey which brought them safely to the other side. The narrative of the grandmother who crossed not just two countries but two wholly different cultures is vividly articulated on the reverse of the quilt cover.

As the solemn visage of the strong, singular woman gazes out at the viewer, the impelling impression is one of a survivor. The family belonged to the Sindhi community and owned several acres of land in Hyderabad. It was a princely lifestyle where personal possessions like bed linen were of the finest kind, each embroidered with its owner's name. The delicate buttons were made of thread and the material was

1–3 *opposite and following pages*
"Excavated Images", by Nalini Malani, 1999. Details from quilt cover, acrylic, transfer for print; 183 x 122 cm.
Images courtesy the artist.

soft muslin. The *lihaf* that Saraswati brought with her had the name of her husband Chhuharmal embroidered in fine cross-stitch. It was typical of the times that the embroidery stitches were Western while the script was Sindhi. As was the fact that photographs of Nalini's relatives show them dressed in Parsi style, which was the style of the upper-class ladies of the 1930s in Karachi. There was the club, the garden with orchids, and the pristine watercolours which her grandfather, a lawyer by training and the scion of the household, engaged in. And there was the comfort of life in Karachi as in Hyderabad and Quetta and Sukkur where her relatives were spread (in Sukkur where Nalini's mother grew up, her maternal grandfather Shankar Singh Advani was a district judge and they lived over a jail and watched the prisoners make beautiful embroidery), and an ever, ever feeling about the order of things. Then a few months before Partition the rumblings grew obvious and the young Nalini and her mother left for Calcutta where her father Jairam Malani had been provided a job with an airline.

But Jairam refused to believe that he would have to leave and waited for his parents who were in Hyderabad. Theosophists by belief, the family was neither Hindu nor Muslim. The Sindhis are a casteless society and are known by their profession. The Malani family are Amils – *amil* meaning "educated". They were assured by their neighbours that no harm would come to them. However the workers, mainly Baluchis and extremely poor, began attacking Nalini's grandfather. After being physically assaulted, his clothes torn, it was clear to him that he had to leave before it was too late. And so Saraswati filled the quilt cover with all her important belongings, family photographs, diaries, and letters before they left in a great hurry. Nalini's grandparents finally arrived in Poona (Pune), a city closest in climate to what they were used to. But here they faced congested life in a small apartment and meagre financial means. Chhuharmal died soon after settling in Poona, where he felt like a caged bird.

The quilt frames the images which haunt Nalini from the many stories she heard. It is as if she navigates diffused memories in soft focus journeying the labyrinth of time. "My great-grandfather Khan Chand Lalwani was principal of the prestigious Academy High School in the cantonment area of Hyderabad, Sindh. This was an English-medium school started by the British. Girls rarely completed their schooling in those days and it was his daughter, my grandmother Saraswati who was urged by her father to finish her matriculation."

This woman was in many ways a strong and determined person. She was extremely strict and ran a frugal household in Poona keeping all food stocks under lock and key. Nalini remembers how she was taught to embroider but could never satisfy her grandmother's high expectations. While on holiday with her grandmother in Poona, she was told to write postcards to her parents in Calcutta, but always in draft form first. The matriarch who had enjoyed fine living, now reduced to a small apartment, became all the more concerned with the only child of her son. She aroused a great deal of awe and considerable feelings of inadequacy in the young Nalini who was training to be an artist.

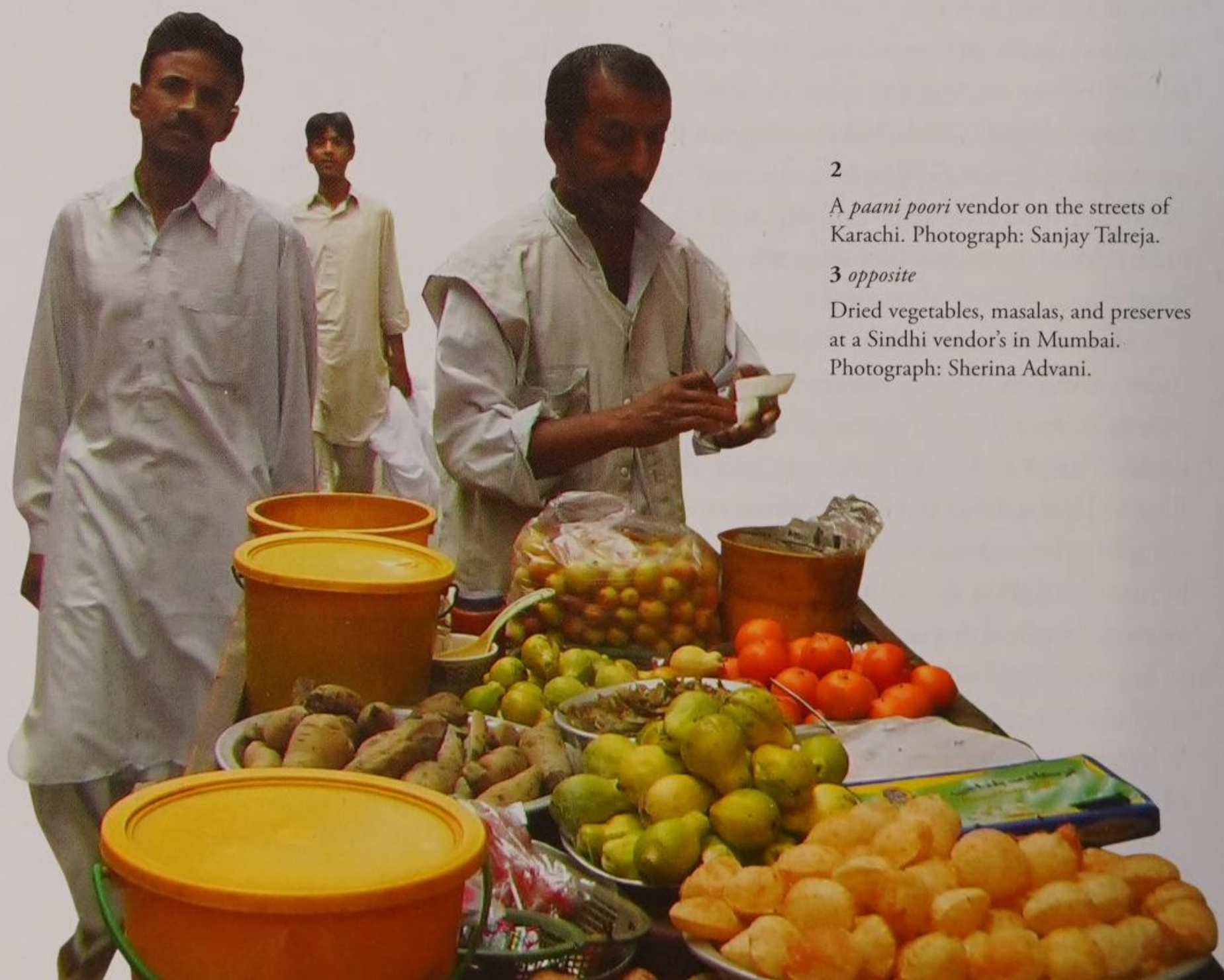
Karachi and indeed all the other towns in Sindh are like mythical cities which Nalini dare not visit for fear of grave disillusionment. Barely a few months old when she left Sindh, her memories are fed by the stories and retelling of stories by family members. "I have this shadow memory which is built from other people's narratives." Out of these Nalini had constructed her own cities and the fear is that they exist only in her imagination. As she points out, "No one talks of Independence. They only talk of Partition." And this speaks of the effects which the troubled times catapulted on several generations. The loss of a right to exist in your own space can only lead to memories of mythical cities suspended in time.

The *lihaf* has the words "Undivided India" embossed on it as well as Manto's powerful story "Toba Tek Singh" imprinted in three scripts – Urdu, Devnagari, and English. It speaks of the life of someone who went berserk while crossing the border. According to Nalini, Manto has immortalized the anguish of Partition in his stories and none is more poignant than the depiction of "Toba Tek Singh". When the country is divided an exchange of population takes place and the Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and others are brought to the border. Bishen Singh craves to stay on in his native land and refuses to move. Finally at sundown they lift him and he falls over and dies rather than leave. In video installations like "Remembering Toba Tek Singh" (1998) Nalini powerfully emphasizes the technological nightmare practised by a nation gone awry. Installed at the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya), it made its mark on the many visitors who came to the exhibition. Nalini's subsequent video assemblages like "Hamletmachine" (2000), "Transgressions" (2001), "Unity in Diversity" (2003), and "Game Pieces" (2003) critique the postcolonial state and the dissolution of essential human ethics.

In "Excavated Images" the viewer is invited to tie threads on the brass safety-pins strewn over the quilt cover and make a wish, much like pilgrims do at a Sufi shrine. When it came back from being exhibited at Lahore and Mumbai it was covered with coloured threads which made it look resplendent. Even as the work is a memorial to the journey navigated by the artist across two divided lands, it remains a record of the hopes and aspirations of many dismembered lives.

1

A kitchen storage cabinet with cookware and provisions. Illustration by M.O. Talreja from *Stree Sansar*, a cookbook in Sindhi by Kala Primlani.



2

A *paani poori* vendor on the streets of Karachi. Photograph: Sanjay Talreja.

3 *opposite*

Dried vegetables, masalas, and preserves at a Sindhi vendor's in Mumbai. Photograph: Sherina Advani.

Flavours of Sindh: Culinary Memories of the Hindu Community

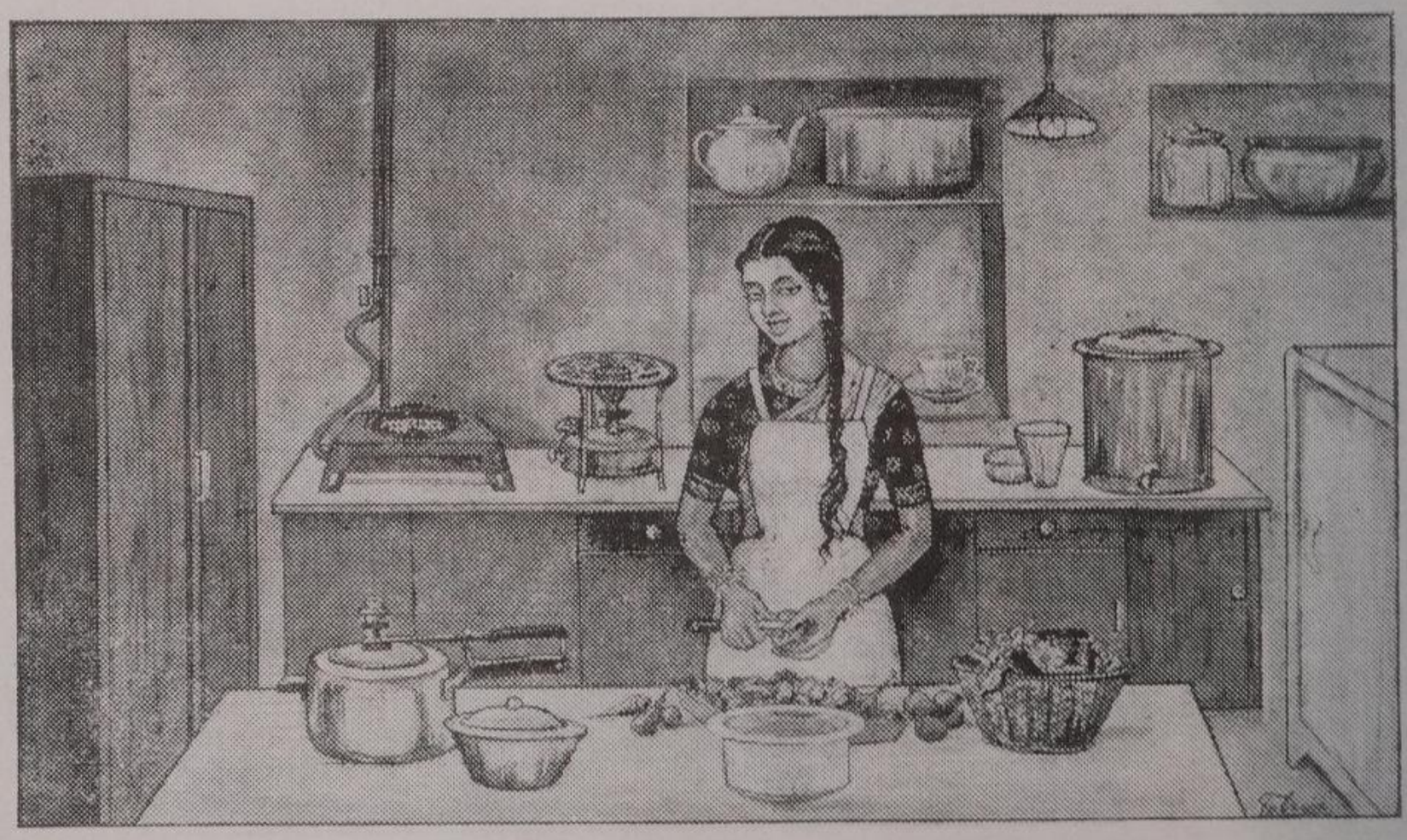
Sherina Advani

One of the most tangible aspects of the diversity of the Indian subcontinent is the distinctive nature of regional cuisine, and Sindh is no exception. Sindh's cuisine varies a great deal due to its physical features. People living along the valleys of the mighty Sindhu Darya – the Indus river – that runs in an S-shape on its 930-km-long journey through Sindh,[1] enjoy the bounty of the river, whereas those who live in the deserts – whether Thar or near Baluchistan – are less fortunate. Coastal Sindh along the Arabian Sea again is blessed with abundant seafood. As is the case with other aspects of Sindhi culture, Sindh's cuisine has of course depended primarily on local produce, but also has been influenced by neighbouring areas such as Punjab and Kutch/Gujarat, as well as the long association with Islamic cultures, both Arab and Persian. In this essay, however, we shall concentrate on the eating practices of the non-Muslim Sindhis as our information is largely drawn from diasporic Sindhi communities. But it should be stated, as is the case with other regions of the subcontinent where Hindus and Muslims have lived together for a long time, despite their differences, the two communities share many culinary habits and have absorbed influences from each other.

4

An array of dishes, fruits, and salads on the dining table. Illustration by M.O. Talreja from *Stree Sansar*, a cookbook in Sindhi by Kala Primlani, 1960.

ڊائننگ روم ۾ کائڻ جي ميز تي جدا جدا کاڌا، ميوا ۽ سلڊس.



5

A kitchen, c. 1950s. Illustration by M.O. Talreja from *Stree Sansar*, a cookbook in Sindhi by Kala Primlani, 1960.

رنڌڻو جنهن ۾ سڀ شيون رڳائتيون ۽ صفائيءَ سان رکيل هجن، جتن کان کڻڻ ۾ مؤج پيئي اچي.

The rich soil along the Indus and its tributaries, and the several lakes, have allowed the cultivation of a wide range of crops: cereals and vegetables. In addition, the rivers, lakes, ponds, and sea are rich in plant, fish, and bird life. It is only natural, then, that the people of such a land would be accustomed to enjoying a wide selection of foodstuffs. That the Sindhis love their food is apparent in the variety of their cuisine as well as in the numerous references to food in Sindhi *paahaakaa*s (expressions and proverbs).

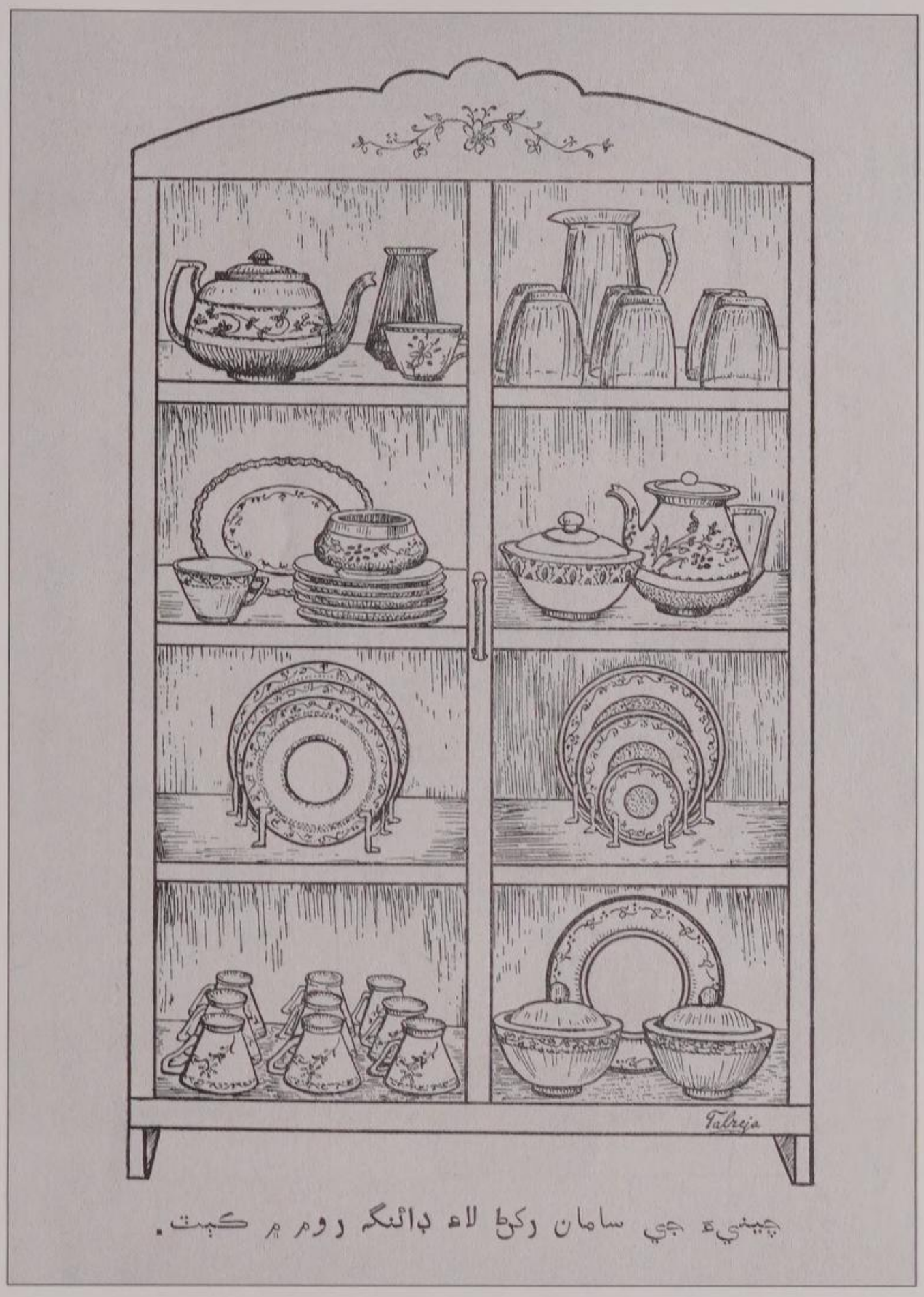
As a general rule, due to the extreme climate of Sindh, in summer heat-producing foods would be consumed during the day and cooler foods at night, while in winter the opposite was done in order to keep warm at night.[2]

Breakfast was usually substantial with an array of choices. To name a few: *koki or masala koki* (thick plain roti of whole-wheat flour kneaded with oil and milk or water, eaten with honey, or with some spices like powdered cumin seeds and black pepper kneaded into the dough); *mithi loli* (sweet roti of whole-wheat flour kneaded with oil and *gur* or jaggery) eaten with mango pickle; *makhan maani* or *kutti* (soft hot rotis generously smeared with butter and with a sprinkling of sugar eaten as rolls or broken into *kutti*, i.e. small pieces); *daal pakwaan* (gram lentil eaten with a crisp, flaky, deep-fried pancake made from wheat flour); *kanka jo bhat* or *lappi* (types of porridge made of cracked wheat); *dhodhaa* (rotis made from jowar or bajra or a mix of both) eaten with a tamarind or coriander-leaf chutney.

During the hot summers in Sindh, after the Holi festival in spring, people would eat rice at night and rotis of wheat or jowar during the day. In winter, after Diwali in October–November, this was reversed and rice was consumed during the day while rotis of wheat or bajra were eaten at night. White rice came from Larkana (in the northwest), and in Laar or Lower Sindh (the southern region) red rice (*ggaarha chaanvar)* was available.[3] Elders of the community to this day claim that *khichri* (the ubiquitous Indian dish of rice cooked with pulses, the origin of the British breakfast concoction known as kedgeree) made from the *ggaarha chaanvar* that was available in Sindh is beyond comparison. The younger generations who have never been to Sindh have not tasted the famed red rice of Laar.

A typical summer lunch would include rotis, *daal,* a vegetable, and either fish or meat, usually mutton. *Tittar* (partridge) and small water birds were also eaten. Sindhi Hindus shared with their Muslim neighbours a love of meat except of course beef. The meal was accompanied by something fried and savoury, *paapad*, and also some pickle. At night the meal would comprise *khichri* with *sai bhaaji* (green leafy vegetable) or some other light vegetable.

Sindhis ate a lot of fish – *dariyaa jaa phal* or "fruits of the river" as they called it. The Indus and the Arabian Sea offered a wide choice of fish such as Pallo, Khago, Kurari, Surmai, Paaplet, Ghaanghat, and many more. Even today, wherever they live Sindhis are very fond of seafood and people who are well-to-do are referred to as "*machhi*



6

Crockery cabinet. Illustration by M.O. Talreja from *Stree Sansar*, a cookbook in Sindhi by Kala Primlani, 1960.

7
"Roree on the Indus", by Lieutenant William Edwards. Lithographed by Charles Haghe. From Edwards' *Sketches in Scinde*, 1846. Reissued by Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2004.

maani vaara aahin [people who regularly eat *machhi* (fish) and *maani (*roti)]".

But the prized fish was Pallo *(Hilsa ilisha).* Pallo is a large marine fish that swims upstream to spawn, all the way from Karachi to Sukkur. It is in its prime by the time it reaches Kotri, a city barely 190 km from Karachi. As it swims further upstream it loses energy and becomes lean by the time it reaches Sukkur. For this reason, the Pallo caught at Kotri is known to be the finest.[4] A young male Pallo in its prime was called *kheero*, while the female carrying the *aanee* (roe) was called *aaniyaaro*, and *khus* was a Pallo with no reproductive organs.

Rohri, a town on the left bank of the Indus, close to Sukkur, is the subject of a drawing by Lieutenant William Edwards (figure 7). In Edwards' description of the drawing he states: "The small island in the distance is held in peculiar veneration ... the natives superstitiously believe that the Pulla fish (which is certainly never found higher up the Indus than this spot) come hither to visit the burial place of Khazir Khizar, a saint of great celebrity, and having fulfilled the purpose of their holy pilgrimage, they are said to return without ever presenting their tails to the sainted isle; an assertion ... which the muddy colour of the river places beyond the power of contradiction." Perhaps the Pallo who escaped the fishermen's nets went there to give thanks to the saint.

Fishermen who catch Pallo are called *maati.* Traditional fishing methods have always been simple yet ingenious, and the *maati*'s only fishing equipment consisted of a *matka* (an earthen pot from which their name was derived), and a short bamboo stick

with a net attached to its end to catch the fish (figure 8). The *matka* had a dual purpose – it was the float the *maati* clutched in one hand while swimming downstream, and also the container into which the catch of Pallo was put.[5] However, most people in Sindh and most certainly the fishermen, were good swimmers and did not need a float. This is expressed in a witty *paahaakaa*: *"Sindh jyoon sirhoon ba tarandyoon aahin"* meaning, "Even the bricks in Sindh float."

The season for Pallo is between February and August. In the summer months it is found in abundance. It was considered auspicious to eat Pallo on the day of Maha Shivratri (which falls in February/March).[6] Pallo as well as its roe (*palle ji aanee*) may be cooked in an onion and tomato gravy. *Koke Pallo* was made by stuffing the fish with onions, tamarind sauce, and other masalas, wrapping it in a thin layer of wheat flour dough, and roasting it in a sand pit over coals. Being very heaty, Pallo was usually eaten with *jowar ji roti* and curd or buttermilk during the day. In Sindh some people even used to dry and preserve it so as to be able to enjoy Pallo in the lean months, just as they used to dry and store some greens like *methi* and *palak*.[7]

The famed Pallo also features in some *paahaakaa*s, for example: "*paise pallo maahango, te takke pallo saahango*" – when you are in dire straits even a Pallo priced at one paisa is too expensive, while in good times a takka (twice the amount) paid for a Pallo is easily affordable. And a rhyme goes: "*Pallo seeray khaan bhi bhallo; seeray mein na saah, Pallo goda khoray khaa*" – Pallo is better than *seero* (a sweet made from pumpkin); *seero* has no life in it; but with Pallo, you can settle down comfortably and enjoy it to your heart's content.

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"Pala fishermen on the Indus", *The Illustrated London News*, February 19, 1876. Woodcut after an original drawing; 16.3 x 23.8 cm. Collection of Rosemary Raza.

It is unfortunate that over the years, due to the silting of the river and the onslaught of pollution in all forms – industrial waste, sewage, oil products dumped from vessels and at port terminals – the marine and river life, particularly the Pallo, has been adversely affected and its numbers severely depleted.[8] Known as Hilsa or *ilish* in Bengali, the Pallo is not only found in the Gangetic delta in Bengal but is a favourite fish among Bengalis of both West Bengal and Bangladesh. Both diaspora Sindhis and Bengalis in North America can indulge in the frozen variety available from Bangladesh in Bangladeshi grocery stores or partake of the fresh but a lesser variety known as Shad.

Another popular fish among Sindhis is Surmai. *Thoom methi machhi* is a Sindhi delicacy made with slices of Surmai and usually eaten with chapattis.

In the villages of Sindh, as Hindus lived in close proximity to Muslims, meat (especially mutton) became a part of the regular diet of many Sindhi Hindus. Often there were no Hindu butchers. When required the Hindu families would buy an animal and give it to a Muslim to cut, clean, and make portions.[10]

Mutton cooked in a tomato-onion gravy, called *seyal gosht*, is a Sindhi speciality. Usually mutton chops/tender ribs are used to make *seyal gosht* which is best eaten with bread or rotis.

Another typically Sindhi mutton dish is *photey bhugal gosht*. The meat is sautéed in a skillet together with cardamom until tender; seasoned with ginger, salt, ground coriander seeds, and black pepper; cooked

Thoom Methi Machhi [9]

SHERINA ADVANI

Ingredients

Surmai	400 g (approx. 4 large slices, each 6" to 7")
Tomatoes	2 large
Garlic	25 cloves, finely chopped
Green chillies	2 or 3, finely chopped
Ginger	½- to 1-inch piece, grated
Methi (fenugreek) leaves	4 cups plucked leaves, chopped
Haldi powder	2 teaspoons
Dhania (coriander seed) powder	2 teaspoons
Salt	½ teaspoon
Oil	6 tablespoons
Water	½ to ¾ cup

Method

1. Clean the fish slices, apply some salt and haldi and keep aside for half an hour.
2. In a large skillet, heat the oil over a medium flame.
3. When oil is hot, add the garlic, ginger, and green chillies and stir fry.
4. When the garlic turns golden brown, add the chopped tomatoes and the chopped methi and other masalas (haldi, dhania, and salt).
5. Allow to cook on a slow fire for about 5 minutes so that the tomatoes soften.
6. Place the fish piece by piece in the skillet and add the water.
7. Place a lid on the skillet and put some water on the lid.
8. After 10 minutes, open and turn the fish slices over.
9. Cover again with water on the lid and allow to cook for another 5 to 7 minutes.

Seyal Gosht

KOMAL MALKANI

Ingredients

A) Masalas for the marinade:	
Haldi powder	4 teaspoons
Ginger	2-inch piece, grated
Garlic	8 cloves, finely chopped
Green chillies	3 or 4, finely chopped
Dhania (coriander) seed powder	5 teaspoons
Red chilli powder	2 teaspoons (or to taste)
Curd	600 g
B) Main ingredients and masalas:	
Mutton chops (or pieces)	1 kg
Onions	12, finely chopped or ground
Tomatoes	8, finely chopped or ground
Green chilli	1, finely chopped
Garlic	2 cloves, finely chopped
Salt	to taste
Elaichi (cardamom) powder	2 teaspoons
Shahzeera (black cumin seed) powder	2 teaspoons
Dhania (coriander) leaves	½ cup

Method

Mix all the ingredients under (A). Dip the mutton pieces in the marinade and place in a vessel. Spread the balance marinade over the mutton so that the pieces are thoroughly coated. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of sugar over the mutton. This sugar helps to tenderize the meat and keep it juicy. Let it marinate for at least an hour.

Cook mutton in a pressure cooker till it is slightly underdone, about 1 or 2 whistles of the cooker.

Gravy

In another thick-bottomed pan, sauté the onions till light brown. Add the tomatoes, green chillies, and garlic and simmer for 5–10 minutes till the tomatoes are cooked and the gravy is light brown.

Transfer the contents of the pressure cooker to the pan with the gravy. Mix and cook over a slow fire till the mutton is done. Add the salt, elaichi, and shahzeera – and cook for a few minutes. Garnish with coriander leaves. Put off the fire and let the mutton stand for 1–2 hours to enable it to absorb the salt and final masalas.

in a gravy; and garnished with coriander leaves. The thin, watery gravy of the mutton is particularly good for convalescing patients.

Sindhis are avid "lotus eaters" – not to be confused with the Lotus Eaters of Homer's *Odyssey*. They eat almost every part of the plant – the stem and root (called *beehu*, figure 9), the flower, the fruit called *pabni*, and also the dried seeds (called *dodaa*, eaten raw). The lotus grew abundantly in the ponds and lakes of Sindh and Sindhis acquired a taste for the plant. So fond are they of it that, after Partition, they introduced the cultivation of the lotus in the areas where they settled.[11] Lotus roots contain much iron as well as vitamins B and C, and are rich in fibre. The versatile root can be boiled, cooked, dried and made into fritters, or sautéed and served as a starter. *Kunne vaaro beehu* (lotus root steamed to succulent perfection in an earthen pot) and *beehu-aloo chop* (lotus root and potato patties) were popular street foods. Lotus root can also be worked up into a vegetable made with potatoes in a brown onion gravy, or made together with meat, or with rice in a pulao. The flowers are used in *raita* (a side dish of *dahi* – curd – mixed with spices and *boondi* –

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Fresh supplies of lotus root come to Mumbai from the Sindhi township of Ulhasnagar. Photograph: Sherina Advani.

deep-fried savoury globules of gram flour – or sometimes with vegetables).

A favourite lunch for a lazy Sunday afternoon is the well-loved Sindhi curry. Each subcommunity of Sindhis has its own variation of Sindhi curry; however the popularity of the dish is universal.

At Sindhi gurudwaras (referred to as *tikaanaa*s), on the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, a faith many Sindhis follow, a *langar* (public meal) is served. *Langar*s are open to people of any caste, creed, or social stratum. Sindhi curry is de rigeur at *langar*s with steamed white rice, *mithhi boondi*, and *poori* (soft bread made from wheat flour dough, which puffs up when deep-fried) with a mixed vegetable dish. But first, *karhaan prasaad* (*seera* made from equal quantities of wheat flour, oil, sugar, and water) is distributed in most *tikaanaa*s immediately after the prayers. *Tosha* (a flaky sweet made of wheat flour, oil, sugar, and rose petals), *murmula (sev,* or fine crisp threads of gram flour paste, deep fried), *paapdi (*a flat version of *murmula*), and *mithhi boondi* (globules of refined wheat flour, deep fried and soaked in sugar syrup), were especially given to devotees to take home.

In a Shikarpuri home a usual accompaniment with Sindhi curry, rice, and *mithhi boondi* is *aaloo tooka* (boiled potato patties, flash-fried twice and seasoned with salt, red chilli, and dry mango powder).

The Shikarpuri Sindhi curry is different in that, instead of plain water, the stock of *toor daal*, a yellow lentil, is added to the sautéed gram powder, along with asafoetida (*hing*), *methi* seeds, curry leaves, and ginger. To this is added *kokam*, okra, *guvaar*, and tomato.

Sai bhaaji, usually eaten with either *khichri* or chapattis, is a staple vegetarian

Sindhi Curry

MALTI BIJLANI

Ingredients

Gram flour	10 tablespoons
Oil	5 tablespoons
Coarsely ground jeera (cumin seeds)	2 teaspoons
Methi (fenugreek) seeds (whole)	½ teaspoon
Red chilli powder	1 teaspoon
Hing (asafoetida)	a pinch
Water	2 litres
Potatoes, medium size, cut into big pieces	2
Baby brinjals, halved	3
Drumsticks, cut into 3-inch pieces	16–20 pieces
Guvaar (guar)	50 g
Okra/ladies' fingers (whole)	c. 15 pieces
Carrots, cut into big pieces	2 or 3
Gourd (doodhi) cut into big pieces	c. 100 g

Tamarind juice (or pieces of dried kokam) may be used to give the curry a slightly sour taste

Salt to taste

Method

In a large vessel heat the oil. Put in the gram flour, ground jeera seeds, methi seeds, and hing. Keep stirring until the flour turns a light brown and the aroma pervades the room.

Add the water, red chilli powder, drumsticks, potatoes, guvaar, and carrots. Let it cook for a while before adding the okra, brinjal, and gourd as these need less time to cook. When the vegetables are tender add in the tamarind juice. Serve hot with white rice, and *mithhi boondi*.

dish made of greens – *paalak* (spinach), *sooaa* (dill), *methi* leaves, and *khatta* (locally grown greens which give the *bhaaji* a sourish taste). A little tomato, onion, carrot, potato, and even brinjal are added to enhance the taste. Fritters like *miteyra* (of sun-dried *tindlee* or gherkins) or *kachryoon* (of sun-dried *guvaar* or *beehu*), *paapad*, and *dahi* are served with *sai bhaaji* and *khichri*.

Non-vegetarian delicacies in the main course are *magza ja pakora* (fritters made of goat's brain), *kapoora* (goat's testes), *jeraandi* (liver), *bukki* (kidney), *keemien ji tikki* (patty made of mince, usually mutton), and *tukkar* (mutton chops), while some typical vegetarian dishes are *maakhni daal* (thick *moong daal*) eaten with *pooris, seyal aaloo–sayoon* (potatoes sautéed with onions eaten with sweetened vermicelli), *dhodho–tidaali* (roti made of millet flour eaten with *daal* made of three mixed lentils), *kaddu ja kofta* (balls made of gourd, fried and dunked in a gravy), *patri paalak* (thin, watery, sour spinach), *taryal vaangan* (fried brinjals), *variyun ji bhaaji* (a mixed vegetable made using *varee*s or sun-dried cakes of ground spiced lentils), and *kheerni* (sweetened milk cooked with sago and garnished with almonds) eaten with *pooris*.

On certain festivals or special days like *Gyaars* (the 11th day after the full moon or new moon) *saatvik* food was eaten, i.e. food cooked with little or no oil, no masala, and no "passion-arousing" vegetables like onions or garlic.

Taahinreen is rice sweetened with *gur* or sugar and garnished with black currants and slivers of fried, dry coconut. *Gur jee taahinreen* was a special rice preparation and was eaten on festivals. *Variyun jo pulao* or pulao made with *varee*s (traditionally made on the day of a wedding), *machhi biryani* (fish biryani), and *beehun jo pulao* (lotus-root pulao) are some other rice preparations.

The selection of breads is also wide: *koki*, *loli*, *dhodho*, and *poori*. Typical Sindhi *maanee*s are rotis or chapattis smeared with ghee, folded and crumpled by hand. These are usually eaten with the main course.

No meal is complete without some *paapad, kheechaa* (rice fritters), *kachryoon, miteyra, pakoraa*s (dumplings of onion or other vegetables dipped in spiced gram-flour paste, and deep-fried till crisp), *tikki*s (patties), *dahi vadaa*s (deep-fried dumplings made from a batter of powdered rice and lentil, dunked in curd seasoned with salt, powdered cumin seeds, and red chillies, and garnished with coriander leaves), *mirch kachori* (green chilli and lentil fritters served with curd and tamarind chutney), or some such side dish. Each of these has so many variations. *Sannaa pakoraa*s are a Sindhi speciality. They contain finely chopped onions, coriander leaves, green chillies, coarsely ground pomegranate and coriander seeds and are deep-fried, broken into halves, and then re-fried to make them crisp – served hot, eaten with coriander chutney. *Tikki*s also come in a variety of forms – *aaloo tikki, gulaabi tikki, tooka, sai bhaaji tikki, aloo beehu chop* (pronounced in Sindhi as *chaap*), to name a few.

Paapads enjoy pride of place in a Sindhi home. *Paapad-paani* (*paapad* with a glass of water) was the first refreshment a visitor would be offered upon entering a Sindhi home. Women were judged, for marriage, by their ability to make *paapad,* among other things.

Most foods, including accompaniments, were home-processed and home-made (figures 1, 4–6). The industrious Sindhi women often would give each other a helping hand. Whenever someone needed to prepare foods that were labour-intensive, the women would congregate to work in the courtyard of her house. *Paapad*s would be rolled out by the stack. The same went for vermicelli, sweets, and even pickles.[12] However, in spite of the quantities and varieties of food made and eaten at home, street food was and still is relished by Sindhis (figures 2 and 3).

In Karachi, a street food vendor of *kunne ja aaloo* (the equivalent of *aaloo chaat*) would sing a short song as he called to sell his fare, that ended with *"...muhinjo naalo kutchhi pataato!"* (...my name is Kutchi potato!). The language of Kutch, a region adjacent to Sindh, is very similar to Sindhi and the regions share other cultural and climatic features.

Hyderabad was famous for *chaat*,[13] a generic term for savoury street foods like *pakoraas*, *tikkis*, *daal poori*, *phooknaa* – called *paani poori* in Mumbai, *dhodho-chutney*, and other things. The *dhodho* available at Dhaaii's stall at Fuleli Canal, on the outskirts of Hyderabad, was legendary. It was baked on a coal fire and served with a generous helping of chutney. People would queue up for "*Dhaaii jo dhodho*".[14] Another famous "fast-food-seller" was Ghanno Pakorai whose speciality was *beehu*, and *ras mein dabroti*. He used to have a stall in Jhuremalani *ghiti* (lane – in Hyderabad, lanes were named after the families/clans that inhabited them). Shirazin Hotel near Roxy Cinema made a delectable decorative pastry called "Roly Poly Pudding", a local variant of the British pudding. To cool off there was *Nevand ji ice cream* and *Uday ji ice cream* and "milk rose" (cold milk flavoured with rose water). Not far from Nevand was a confectioner, popularly known as *Taaro khoorey vaaro* (Taaro, the fellow who had a furnace). His bread sticks sweetened with *gur*, the top ends bent at right angles to resemble miniature walking sticks, were well-known.

Dabal/Dabroti/Dabalroti is the Sindhi term for sliced bread, or for *pau*, of which they are very fond. "*Daal chholaa dabal, tu khaai vathhu dal, Oh kaka, oh bhaau, heeade aa, ain tu khaai vathhu daal*" went an old Sindhi film song – "*Daal chholaa dabal*, enjoy and eat your fill, oh uncle, oh brother, come here, and eat *daal*".

Some street stalls sold only cold drinks. *Lumlate*, a corruption of the word "lemonade", was a generic Sindhi term for all kinds of cold drinks.[15] Naamo & Reejhu was a general store in Hyderabad that sold, among other things, *baatli* (bottled cold drinks) and corn on the cob boiled in salt water, referred to as *obaariyal sangha*. Children would eat the corn off the cob and suck on the cob to get a taste of the remnant salt water. Rose sherbet and *thaadal* are other coolers, usually home-made. *Thaadal* or *thandai*, a mix of sherbet, dry fruit, and spices in milk, is drunk on special days like Holi and Maha Shivratri by Hindus.

In Shikarpur, people would flock in the evenings to Lakhi-Dar, an area where one could savour *Radhe ji chop* and cool off with Moti's Kulfi or Sunder's Kulfi, *thaadal, lassi*, or milk. *Dahi vadaas* and *mithai* (sweets) from Shikarpur were legendary. It was said that if one visited Shikarpur and did not eat at Lakhi-Dar, one had not seen Shikarpur at all.

People of Rohri ate *tidaali daal*. This was their staple diet and their speciality eaten along with any meat dish. The celebrated sweet of Rohri was *maahe ji mithai*, made of *urad daal* (a white lentil).

Kailash Parbat Hindu Hotel, Tharu Sweets, and Jhama Sweets in Mumbai are popular Sindhi eateries, well known for *channaa dabalroti, tikki channaa, pakoraa, kulfi faloodaa,* and *paani poori*. While these dishes may not all be unique to Sindhi food, the ingredients and manner of preparation are distinctly Sindhi, e.g. the *paani pooris* are stuffed with boiled potato and crisp *boondi*, dunked in tamarind chutney and *jeera paani*. At one time, Kailash Parbat even had a Sindhi *paanvaalaa* whose cold sweet *paan* was famous. He would prepare large stocks of them and keep them in an ice-box to service the steady flow of orders through the day. Several years ago he disappeared. The buzz was that the enterprising *paanvaalaa* had moved to Dubai!

While many sweets such as *pethe jo seero* (pumpkin *halwa*) were made at home,

*mithaivaalaa*s were heavily patronized, too. Typically Sindhi *mithai*s include *pistan baadaamiyun jo varo* (more popularly known as *chikki*), *pistan ji mithai, khaajan* (cashew nut) *ji mithai, baadaamiyun ja laddoo, choori ja laddoo, sona halwa, muthiya, tosha,* and Karachi *halwa.*

Specialities of Hyderabad were *pistan baadaamiyun jo halvo* (hard, stick-jaw-like, garish coloured jelly cubes with bits of almonds and pistachios set in them) and *mohanthal* (a home-made sweet made from gram flour, sugar, and ghee). On Holi it was *geehar* (large *jalebi*s) and on *Uttraan* (in mid-January) *bhorindaa laddoo*s would be made from sesame seeds and honey.

Pickles had a place of their own, whether in the cellar or in the meal. Large white-and-ochre, ceramic or transparent glass *barnee*s (jars) would be filled with pickles to last the season (figure 10). With more and more nuclear families, Sindhis today may not have the large *barnee*s of yesteryear, but pickles they still make!

Khaajan ji Mithai

SHERINA ADVANI

Ingredients

Coarsely ground cashew nuts	1 kg
Sugar	300 g
Water	½ cup
Butter	1–2 tablespoons

Method

Dissolve sugar in water and cook on high flame till one-string consistency is reached. (This should take a minute or two). Put off fire immediately and quickly add the butter, then ground cashews, and mix well.

Turn out on a greased surface and roll out to required thickness. Garnish with slivers of almonds and pistachios and roll a little again in order to embed the dry fruit on the surface. Cut into pieces with a greased knife and allow to cool. Store in an air-tight container and consume within a week.

Mithhi chutney is a celebrated Sindhi sweet-and-sour mango pickle, preferably made with *totapuri* or *rajapuri* mangoes. While it is similar to *chhundo* made by Gujaratis, it is distinct in the ingredients and manner of preparation. *Amba jo murbbo* (mango pickled in sugar syrup), *tel ji ambri* (raw mango pickled in mustard oil), and *mithi ambri* (dried raw mango pickled in jaggery and spices) are other mango pickles.

Winter is the time to gorge on winter carrots (Indian red carrots) pickled in mustard oil or in water, called *kanji*. The carrots are parboiled and dunked in water and seasoned with salt, haldi, and red chilli powder, coarsely ground mustard seeds, and finely chopped fresh garlic. The pickle has to be kept in the sun for three or four days to

Mithhi Chutney

SHERINA ADVANI

Ingredients

Raw mango, peeled and cored and cut into small pieces	1 kg
Sugar	1 kg
Onion seeds (*kalaunjee*)	1 teaspoon
Bay leaf (*tej patta*)	5–6 leaves
Red chillies (whole)	5–6
Red chilli powder	1 teaspoon
Black pepper (whole)	1 teaspoon
Black currants	1 tablespoon
Garlic, whole cloves	one bulb
Salt	½ teaspoon
Vinegar	¼ cup

Method

Boil the mango pieces in a little water till slightly tender.

Add sugar and all the other ingredients except vinegar and cook until sugar dissolves and becomes thick.

Put off fire and let cool. When cool, add vinegar, mix well, and bottle.

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Typical *barnee*s in which pickles are stored. Photograph: Sherina Advani.

turn a little sour and mature before it is ready to eat. The *kanji* is drunk by the bowlful! The carrots can also be pickled in mustard oil instead of water in exactly the same way. Small white onions are also pickled in mustard oil or in water, using almost the same ingredients. Punjabis and Rajasthanis too have a variation of this recipe.

Mixed pickles comprising a combination of green chillies, ginger, and lemons in salt and lemon juice; or a mix of carrots, berries, cauliflower, and other vegetables are also popular. And Sindhis being keen meat-eaters, it is not surprising that meat pickles are prepared as well.

Some typical Sindhi sauces/masalas include *thoom methi masaalo* (described in the recipe for *thoom methi machhi*) and *seyal masaalo* (used in the gravy for *seyal gosht*). *Seyal masaalo*, a favourite in Sindhi cuisine, is basically a masala made of onions and tomatoes. The chopped onions are stir fried in a little oil with some cumin seeds until slightly brown, then tomatoes, chillies, and haldi are added. Some dishes require powdered coriander seeds and/or asafoetida, as well. All this is cooked for a few minutes before adding the vegetables or meat. This kind of gravy is garnished with fresh coriander leaves. A favourite savoury dish called *seyal dabalroti,* is made by soaking pieces of bread in this sauce.[16]

Many fruits came from the rich fertile soil of Sindh: *shatoot* (mulberries), *daunraa, soofi ber,* and other kinds of berries; *vinjni, langdo,* and *totapuri* mangoes; *naarangyoon* (oranges), *sangtira* (sweet limes), small apples, black jamuns, grapes, figs, guavas; Kandahari pomegranates, coconuts along the coast, and in some places, dates. Mangoes were sent to the daughters and sisters of the house in the season, as it was considered auspicious to gift this fruit.[17]

Chat with a person born and raised in Sindh and you'll get delightful stories about life there. Dr G. Gidwani's article "A train journey between Hyderabad and Karachi" provides one such glimpse. Loosely translated excerpts are given below:[18]

> Everyone would remember Jhimpeer, where you would get very hot meat balls in gravy with red chillies floating in them. Thick cold chapattis with hot kababs could be bought there. ... I have never had anything quite like those kababs anywhere else, but I came across something like them when the train halted at a small station just before Ajmer. Passengers went and surrounded the Sindhi *khomechevaala* (hawker who carries his wares in a basket and places it on an hour-glass-shaped cane stand) and within a few minutes all his snacks were sold out. Many returned to the train disappointed.
>
> When the train reached Jungshai, half the journey was over. At Jungshai you would get *raan* (roasted goat leg), roasted *teetar*, and the *malai* (cream) of Thatta, known as *kunj*, and many other specialities.

About Sindhi *daaru* (liquor):

> …at Kotri junction, one would get the fragrance of Sindhi liquor. It was famous all over Sindh. In Kotri's *daaru*, a little *misri* (coarse sugar), *kesar* (saffron), and *elaichi* (cardamom) were put in the

bottle and the cork sealed with earth, and kept for years. Then, on some happy occasion, one took it out and drank it from a silver *katori* or cup, in small sips, taking up to one hour to finish that amount. Khairpur state was also famous for *daaru*. Those who drank alcohol preferred this one and praised it a lot. It was known as *dunbe sharaab*. Some say that there is a type of sheep known as *dunbo*, and its tail would be added to the *sharaab*. What was actually in it only its makers know! ... Our old ladies would hide a bottle of Kotri *sharaab* in their closets. They would also keep a chillum and take a puff now and then.

They would sing, that puffing on a chillum would prevent constipation. If they felt like having a bidi, they would have a Sindhi bidi in private. In that way our ladies had a style of their own.

And it's not just the ladies but Sindhis in general, who have a style of their own – be it in their manner of dress, or their food, or their accent when speaking English (they say "*whuch*" for "which", and pronounce "pleasure" as "*player*") or even in the way they Sindhi-ize Hindi words ("*subhu*" for "*subah*" – meaning, morning; or "*deynga*" for "*dogey*" – meaning, will give).

The Indus has taught its children many lessons, the most important of them being to assimilate, to adapt, never to remain stagnant – qualities essential for survival. Sindhis have learnt this well, whichever country they have settled in. And while they have blended seamlessly into their adopted lands they hold on to their identity through their language, cultural traditions, and of course, their food.

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NOTES

1. "A Physical Geography of Sindh", an article by Dr Altaf A. Memon, on the Internet.

2. *Sindh ja Aguna Hindu* [The Early Hindu Inhabitants of Sindh], by Teckchand Nawalrai Tarachandani (Ahmedabad, 1966). Efforts were made to locate and contact his family for permission to incorporate some data from his book in this article. Though not successful in locating his family, I have used here some of the information meticulously recorded by Mr Tarachandani, so that it is accessible and not lost to future generations. (Two chapters of his book have been translated into English by Gul and Briji Asnani of Allentown, Pennsylvania, USA. A translation of the whole book would be a valuable reference work.)

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. "Devastation of the Indus River Delta", a paper by Dr Altaf A. Memon, on the Internet.

9. Adapted by the writer from Kala Primlani's cookbook, *Stree Sansar* [Woman's World] (Bombay, 1960).

10. Tarachandani, op. cit.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Gulab Gidwani's booklet, "*Sindh jun Yaadgiryoon*" [Memories of Sindh], Bombay, November 2004.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Inputs from Popati Hiranandani's article, "*Sindhi Khaadaa*" [Sindhi Food] in *Bharatiya Sindhu Sabha*, November–December 2007.

17. Tarachandani, op. cit.

18. Dr G. Gidwani, "A train journey between Hyderabad and Karachi", *Amil Samachar*, bilingual monthly paper (English and Sindhi), Bombay, Vol. 14, No. 9, June 1998, free translation from the Sindhi by Gul A. Chandiramani for her grandchildren.

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BACK: A spread of *rallis* at the shrine of Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif, at Bhit Shah, Sindh. Photograph: Noorjehan Bilgrami.

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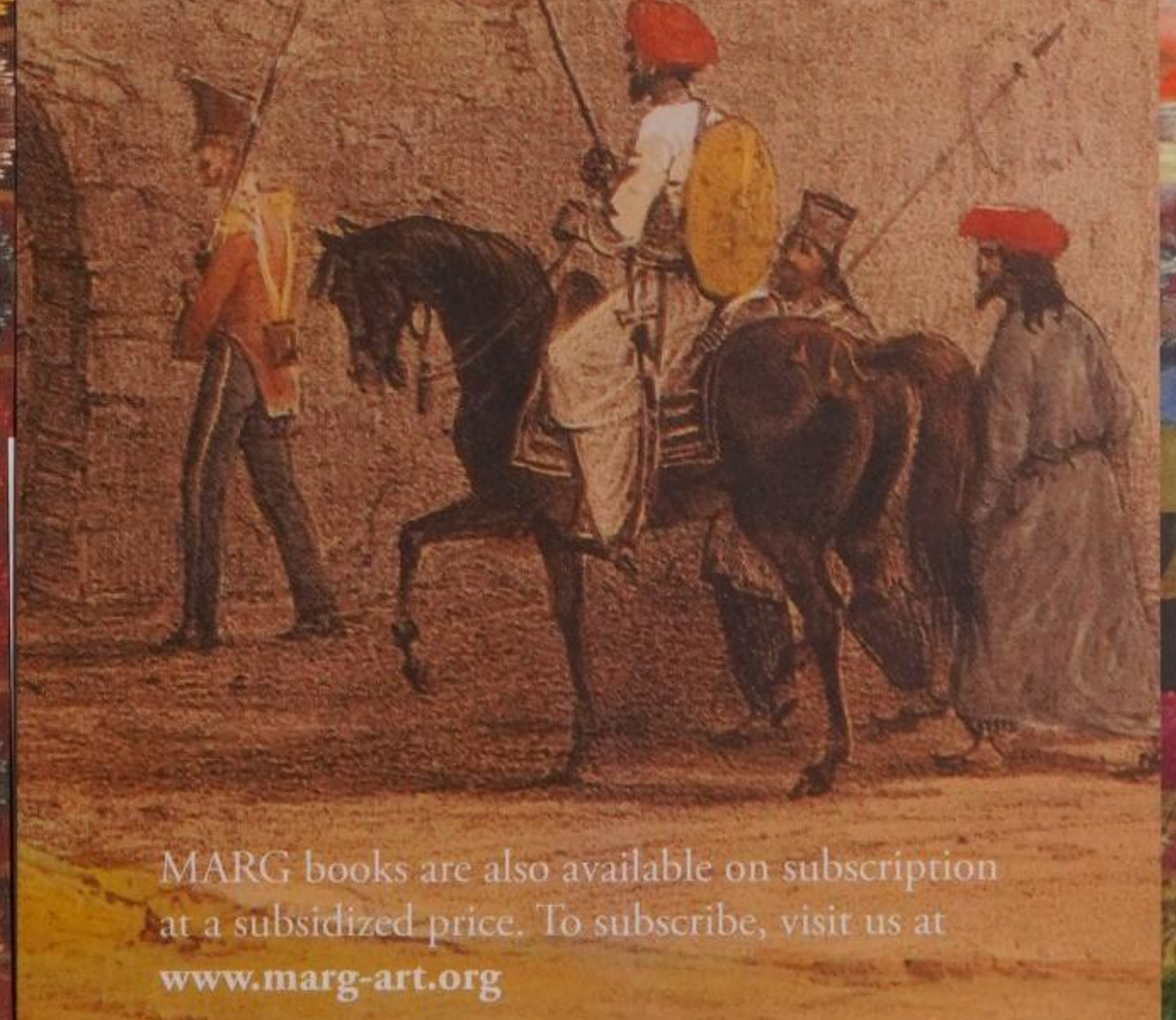

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